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THE

WORKS

OF

JOHN WITHERSPOON, D. D.

SOMETIME MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT PAISLEY, AND LATE PRESIDENT OF PRINCETON COLLEGE, IN NEW JERSEY:

CONTAINING

ESSAYS, SERMONS, &c.

ON

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS;

INTENDED TO ILLUSTRATE AND ESTABLISH THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION BY GRACE, AND TO POINT OUT ITS INFLUENCE ON HOLINESS OF LIFE.

TOGETHER WITH HIS

LECTURES ON MORAL PHILOSOPHY, ELOQUENCE, AND DIVINITY;

HIS SPEECHES IN THE AMERICAN CONGRESS;

AND MANY OTHER VALUABLE PIECES NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED IN THIS COUNTRY.

VOL. II.

EDINBURGH:

PRINTED FOR OGLE AND AIKMAN; J. PILLANS AND SONS; J. RITCHIE; AND J. TURNBULL.

1804.

BIBLIOTHECÆ
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PRACTICAL DISCOURSES

ON THE

LEADING TRUTHS OF THE GOSPEL.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Sermons, though firſt preached on particular occaſions, have been ſelected in order to form a little ſyſtem of the truths of the goſpel, to point out their relation to one another, and their influence on practice. There appears to be the greater neceſſity of this, that evangelical principles have for ſome time paſt been falling greatly into diſrepute; which I take to be the true, and the ſingle reaſon, why religion is at preſent in ſo very weak and languiſhing a ſtate. The attempt ought not to be conſidered as ariſing from a thirſt of fame; for a man muſt judge very ill who ſhould expect to increaſe his reputation by eſpouſing this deſpiſed cauſe. I muſt alſo obſerve, that theſe diſcourſes are not publiſhed as containing any thing better than many practical writings of the laſt age; but as an endeavour to perpetuate the knowledge of the ſame truths, and to ſupply the place of thoſe which, through the antiquity of ſtyle and manner, ſeem to be falling into forgetfulneſs. If there is any thing particular in them, it is an attempt to illuſtrate the ſcripture-doctrine by experience, and obſervations on human life. It hath long been my opinion, that an impartial view of the courſe of providence, and of the characters and ways of men, would greatly contribute to eſtabliſh us in the belief of the truths of the goſpel; and that the very oppoſition given to them by worldly men, ſerves at once to accompliſh and confirm them.

THERE will be found, in many of the ſermons, expreſſions of reference to the time of their being firſt preached, particularly to the adminiſtration of the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper. It had been eaſy to have altered the ſentences in which expreſs mention is made of that ordinance; but as there is often a peculiarity or propriety of language through the whole of a diſcourſe, which is beſt underſtood when we know the time and circumſtances of its firſt compoſition, I choſe to let them ſtand as they were. Another reaſon inclined me to the ſame thing: the choice of the ſubjects for publication was made in ſuch a manner as to give a pretty full view of the revelation of divine mercy in the goſpel, and by that means to illuſtrate and ſupport the truth. But as there is a great danger of running too much into controverſy and ſpeculation, the beſt way to avoid this ſeemed to be, to let the ſermons retain every thing particular and practical, intended for the inſtruction, reproof, or conſolation, of the audience, when they were firſt delivered. With theſe few remarks, I commit them to the candour of the public, with very little concern as to the judgement of thoſe who read only to paſs ſentence upon the ability of the writer; but earneſtly praying, that God may make them inſtrumental in turning ſinners from the error of their ways, and promoting the ſanctification and peace of thoſe who have known the truth as it is in Jeſus.

J. W.

Paiſley, May 16. 1768.

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PRACTICAL DISCOURSES

ON THE

LEADING TRUTHS OF THE GOSPEL.

SERMON I.

ALL MANKIND BY NATURE UNDER SIN.

ROMANS, iii. 23.

For all have ſinned, and come ſhort of the glory of God.

THE whole revelation of the will of God to mankind, both in the Old Teſtament and the New, proceeds upon the ſuppoſition that they are ſinners; that is to ſay, tranſgreſſors of his law, and liable to the ſtroke of his juſtice. This only can give meaning to the doctrine of *redemption*. None can underſtand, at leaſt none can reliſh or embrace it, unleſs they believe, and are perſuaded of this preliminary truth.

What I have now ſaid appears from many expreſs paſſages of the holy ſcriptures; and is particularly evident from the general ſtrain, and from the

very ſtructure of the epiſtle to the Romans. In it the apoſtle, who had never been at Rome, gives a full and particular account of the doctrine of Chriſt; and he lays the foundation for this by a diſtinct and laboured proof, that all mankind, both Jews and Gentiles, are *under ſin*. In imitation of his example, I intend to begin my diſcourſes on practical religion, by endeavouring to impreſs your minds with a ſenſe of the ſame truth. This muſt lead the way to the ſaving knowledge of the Redeemer; and as he only can build ſecurely, who takes care that every part of the ſuperſtructure reſt immediately or ultimately upon the foundation, it is as neceſſary to be remembered by ſaints, as to be received by ſinners.

It may perhaps, on a ſlight view, appear to be ſuperfluous. "All mankind," ſome will ſay, "are ready to acknowledge that they are ſinners; and there is great reaſon to believe they are ſincere in this confeſſion." But, my brethren, a little reflection may convince you, that this general acknowledgement is either very inſincere, or very imperfect and defective. It is plainly a light ſenſe of ſin that enables the multitude to ſleep in ſecurity. It is plainly a light ſenſe of ſin that betrays men into the commiſſion of it, and emboldens them to continue in it. It is plainly a light ſenſe of ſin that blunts the edge of all the threatenings in the word of God, and the admonitions of his providence. Is it not from a light ſenſe of ſin, that when the preaching of the goſpel is not wholly deſerted, its ineſtimable truths are received without thankfulneſs, and heard without profit?

For theſe reaſons, I propoſe, through the aſſiſtance of divine grace, to diſcourſe a little on the words of the apoſtle now read: "For all have ſinned, and come ſhort of the glory of God:" And, in ſo doing, ſhall,

I. Endeavour to confirm the truth contained in them, That all mankind are ſinners, or tranſgreſſors of the law of God, and liable to his righteous judgement. And,

II. Shall make a practical improvement of the ſubject.

I. In the *firſt* place, then, let us endeavour to confirm the truth contained in the text, That all mankind are ſinners, or tranſgreſſors of the law of God, and liable to his righteous judgment. And here, my brethren, it puts me a little to a ſtand, in what manner to handle this important ſubject; whether in the way of reaſon or affection; whether in the way of cool and concluſive arguments directed to the judgement, or pointed interrogatories directed to the conſcience. Many, nay innumerable, are the cavils that have been brought by men of corrupt minds againſt this fundamental truth. The father of lies, indeed, ſeems to conſider it, and juſtly, as the corner-ſtone of true religion, which if he is able to weaken or undermine, it muſt end in the fall and ruin of the whole fabric. If there be any among you, as poſſibly there are, infected with the poiſon of infidelity, all exhortation and warning will be treated by ſuch with diſdain, while their objections, however weak, have not been brought into view. On the other hand,

there are multitudes of ſinners borne away by luſt and paſſion, who are incapable of underſtanding the force of ſpeculative reaſoning, and who have an unhappy tendency to overlook, as what does not concern them, every thing that is treated in that way. I ſhall be obliged, therefore, to have an eye to both: and oh! that it may pleaſe God to enable me ſo to propoſe to the judgement, and ſo to preſs upon the conſcience, this neceſſary truth, as that ſome careleſs perſons may be awakened, and brought to an attention to the one thing needful; and that if any have hitherto taken up with imperfect notions of religion, and built their hope upon the ſand, they may be perſuaded in time to diſtruſt that dangerous ſituation, and to found it upon *the Rock of ages*.

For the reaſon above aſſigned, it is difficult to determine what uſe is to be made of ſcripture-teſtimony on ſuch a ſubject. The charge of guilt upon the ſinner ſeems to be only preparatory to, and muſt, as it were, pave the way for the reception of ſcripture-truths. If the teſtimony of God in ſcripture is to be reſted on, this one paſſage is ſufficient; but the unbelieving heart is ready to challenge and call in queſtion every ſuch ſcripture-declaration. I find the worthy author of a well-known catechiſm, commonly uſed in the inſtruction of children, joins together ſcripture and experience, in the anſwer to that queſtion, "How do you know, that you are born in a ſtate of ſin and miſery?" Anſwer, "God's word tells me ſo. Beſides, I find my heart naturally backward to that which is good, and prone to that which is

evil." After this example, and considering that by the law is the knowledge of sin, we shall not separate them; the rather, that God is able to make his own word, even in the bare repetition of it, quick and *powerful*, Heb. iv. 12. In the further illustration of this head, therefore, I shall, *first*, briefly lay before you some of the scripture-declarations on this subject; and, *2dly*, confirm them from experience, the visible state of the world, and the testimony of our own hearts.

First, Allow me to lay before you some of the scripture-declarations on this subject: And that I may avoid handling the subject systematically and tediously, I join together original and actual sin. Every one who is able to understand what I say, is concerned in both; and indeed they are inseparable the one from the other. The deplorable wickedness in which the world in general is overwhelmed, hath flowed in a continued stream from the first sin of Adam; and the sinfulness of every person's practice has the corruption of his nature as its fruitful source. See the account given of the old world, Gen. vi. 5. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." This you may compare with Gen. viii. 21. "And the Lord said, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth."

See also the confession of David, Psal. li. 5. "Behold I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." In this the Psalmist

plainly and clearly teaches the original and univerſal corruption of our nature. What he aſſerts concerning himſelf, muſt be equally true of all the human race; otherwiſe, inſtead of making a proper part of his confeſſion, it would be an excuſe or extenuation of his ſin. Nothing can more plainly ſhow the force of this text, than the aukward endeavours uſed by ſome to evade or miſinterpret it. For example, how mean a ſubterfuge is it to pretend, that David declared he was ſhapen in iniquity, and conceived by his mother in ſin, becauſe he was the iſſue of ſome criminal commerce between his father and a maid-ſervant, or between the wife of Jeſſe and another man? This is plainly a profane invention, offered without any manner of proof, or the leaſt inſinuation in the hiſtory of that great prince. Beſides, it is evidently beſide his purpoſe in the pſalm referred to, where he is confeſſing his own ſinful nature, and not the ſinful deeds of his parents. If there be meaning in words, his intention is, to humble himſelf before God, not only for his adultery and murder in the matter of Uriah, but as a "tranſgreſſor from the womb."

To this you may add the teſtimony of a greater than David, viz. our bleſſed Lord and Saviour himſelf, John, iii. 6. "That which is born of the fleſh, is fleſh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is ſpirit." For underſtanding the proof drawn from this text, you may obſerve, that though the word *fleſh* has various ſignifications in ſcripture; ſometimes, for example, ſignifying the weakneſs of our mortal nature, unable to ſupport itſelf, and

liable to a variety of changes, which muſt at laſt end in diſſolution; yet here it evidently ſignifies our nature as corrupted by ſin. This appears from the oppoſition of the two clauſes; for it is certain, that thoſe who are regenerated, are ſtill liable to all the weakneſs of mortality. It muſt therefore bear the ſame meaning in this place as in Rom. viii. 8. "So then they that are in the fleſh cannot pleaſe God." It is with a view to this great truth that Job, who pleads with ſo much warmth his general integrity, yet ſays, Job, xiv. 3. 4. "And doſt thou open thine eyes upon ſuch an one, and bringeſt me into judgement with thee? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one."

With this agree many other ſcripture-declarations, ſome of which I ſhall mention. Pſal. xiv. 2. 3. "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men; to ſee if there were any that did underſtand, and ſeek God. They are all gone aſide, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no not one." Pſal. lviii. 3. "The wicked are eſtranged from the womb; they go aſtray as ſoon as they be born, ſpeaking lies." Iſa. xlviii. 8. "Yea, thou heardeſt not, thou kneweſt not, yea, from that time that thine ear was not opened: for I knew that thou wouldſt deal very treacherouſly, and waſt called a tranſgreſſor from the womb." Rom. iii. 9. 10. 11. 12. "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wiſe: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under ſin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no

not one: There is none that underſtandeth, there is none that ſeeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no not one." To theſe, I only add that clear and ſtrong paſſage, Eph. ii. 1. 2. 3. "And you hath he quickened who were dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, wherein in time paſt ye walked according to the courſe of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the ſpirit that now worketh in the children of diſobedience. Among whom alſo we all had our converſation in times paſt, in the luſts of our fleſh, fulfilling the deſires of the fleſh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

In this ſummary view of the declarations of ſcripture upon this ſubject, I have confined myſelf to ſuch paſſages as have an aſpect upon the ſtate of our nature in general. And, indeed, as concluſive a proof of its being the doctrine of ſcripture, may be drawn conſequentially as directly. With this view, not to mention many other arguments, I beg your attention to the two following: 1. The tenor of the goſpel-meſſage, particularly the extent of the commiſſion, and the language uſed through the whole: Mark xvi. 15. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the goſpel to every creature." John, iii. 16. "For God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life." Examine the import of this truth. Whom did the Father love? or to whom

did he ſend the Saviour? To the world, and to every creature. For what end did he love them, and for what purpoſe did the Redeemer come? To ſave them from periſhing. But why were they in danger of periſhing? Doubtleſs, becauſe they were in ſin. In vain, then, do men exerciſe their ingenuity in explaining away particular paſſages. This truth does not reſt upon an expreſſion or two, the meaning of which muſt be aſcertained by critical ſkill, but upon the whole of the goſpel. If we do not throw aſide the Bible altogether, Chriſt Jeſus came into the world to obtain forgiveneſs for the guilty, to ſave the miſerable, and to redeem the ſlave.

The other argument is drawn from the ſeals of the covenant of peace; and particularly the initiating ſeal, both under the Old Teſtament and the New, of which infants were admitted to be partakers. If they received theſe ſeals before the commiſſion of actual guilt, it cannot be but the nature itſelf muſt be defiled; eſpecially as baptiſm is expreſsly called *the baptiſm of repentance for the remiſſion of ſins*, Mark i. 4.

Thus I have laid before you what the ſcripture teaches us on the ſinfulneſs of our nature, including all the poſterity of Adam, without exception. I beſeech you, therefore, my beloved hearers, to conſider the concern you have in it, as a part of the whole. If you have any belief of the truth of the ſcriptures as the word of God, attempt not to warp or pervert them when ſpeaking contrary to your fond prejudices. Deſire not that miniſters ſhould ſpeak unto you ſmooth things, and prophe-

cy deceit; but receive with humility and fear the divine will, however heavy a ſentence of condemnation it may carry againſt yourſelves, viz. that you are ſinners by nature; that your hearts are eſtranged and alienated from the love of God; and that, if you die in that condition, you ſhall not ſee his face in mercy.

I now proceed to the *ſecond* branch of this head; which was, to confirm the account given in ſcripture from experience, that is to ſay, from the viſible ſtate of the world, and the teſtimony of our own hearts.

Let us, then, ſee what evidence is afforded us from the viſible ſtate of the world, *that all have ſinned*, &c. And here, my brethren, what an inſtructive leſſon, but at the ſame time what a humbling and melancholy proſpect, opens to our view! There are many remarks which might be profitably made on the ſtate of the world in every age, to ſhew how much ſin hath reigned in the hearts of men, and what deſolation it hath wrought in the place of their abode. The great difficulty is, to range them in proper order, and propoſe them in a ſimple and perſpicuous manner, that ordinary hearers may underſtand and profit by them. For this purpoſe, let us firſt take a view of mankind in a public or national, and then in a private or perſonal capacity.

1. Let us conſider mankind in a public or national capacity. In this view, what is the hiſtory of paſt ages but the hiſtory of human guilt? If, inſtead of taking up with the idle and viſionary hypotheſes of philoſophers, we only attend to what

men have been in fact, we shall be obliged to say, with the Spirit of God, that "the imagination of the heart of man is only evil from his youth." It is not proper here to omit, or rather it is highly necessary to mention, the impiety and idolatry of several nations of the world. Excepting the small number of Abraham's family, who were *the election of God*, and, by a peculiar disposition of Providence, the depositaries of his truths, every other nation upon the face of the globe, not only deserted the worship of the true God, but fell headlong into the most stupid and sottish idolatry. This was not peculiar to those nations who continued in ignorance, and whom the more improved and polished thought proper to distinguish by the name of *barbarians*, but was at least equally true of those who were most highly civilized. Of the wisest nations, as well as the wisest men, the apostle very justly says in this epistle, ch. i. 22. 23. "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools; and changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things."

I must make even a farther observation, and intreat your attention to it, That the wisest in profession seem to have become the greatest fools. It seems to have been designed in providence, as a standing and indelible mark of the vanity of human wisdom, that those very nations who were most early in their application to, and most successful in the cultivation of the liberal arts, were the most extravagant and senseless in their theological opinions and religious rites. I mean, particularly,

the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans; worſhipping bulls and calfs, ſerpents and inſects, the moſt ſtupid of four-footed beaſts, and creeping things of the moſt ſhocking form. This every one may ſatisfy himſelf of, who will look into the hiſtories of theſe celebrated nations, as they have been tranſmitted to us by themſelves.

Conſider, my brethren, the unnatural cruelty of the religious rites of many nations. It was frequent and general with them, to offer up human ſacrifices, and make their children paſs through the fire; the very reflection on which is ſufficient to fill a conſiderate perſon with horror. Conſider alſo the ſcandalous impurity of ſome of their ceremonies, and the obſcene hiſtory of the objects of their worſhip. Strange to think of indeed! yet ſo it is, that moſt of the eminent writers of antiquity are employed in deſcribing the drinking and merriment, the ſcolding and quarrels, the tricks and robberies, and the amorous intrigues of their gods and goddeſſes.

If we think in a ſerious manner on theſe undoubted facts, can we help ſaying, Oh! the ingratitude of thoſe wretches among us who call themſelves freethinkers, who have been taught by revelation only to form rational and conſiſtent notions of the firſt cauſe and creator of all things, and yet reject revelation entirely, and pretend to found them upon human reaſon! I am ſenſible there are ſome who do not think that the idolatry of the heathen world ought to be reckoned among their crimes; but if you will conſult the Old Teſtament, you will find it conſidered there as the firſt and moſt atro-

cious crime which ſolicited the vengeance of an offended God. If you conſult this epiſtle to the Romans, you will find it leads the way in the account given of human apoſtacy. The firſt of all the ten commandments, which were given as a ſum of the moral law, is, "Thou ſhalt have no other gods before me." And indeed, if the firſt duty of natural religion be a confeſſion and acknowledgement of God our creator, the firſt of all ſins muſt be, a contempt of his name, or a profanation of his worſhip.

But idolatry was not alone. From this, as a fruitful ſource, flowed every other human vice. What a terrible detail is given us by the hiſtorians of every age! On what is it that all the great tranſactions of the world have ſtill turned? Has it not been on the ambition, cruelty, injuſtice, oppreſſion, and raging luſt and impurity, of men. Whatever number of virtuous perſons was among them, they ſeem to have either lain concealed, or fallen a ſacrifice to the envy and malice of others. Since the firſt murder, of Abel, by his brother Cain, what terrible havock has been made of man by man! We are ſo habituated to this, that it makes little impreſſion. We can even peruſe, with attention and delight, the narratives of ſtratagems of war, ferocity in combat, devaſtation and bloodſhed. Who are the perſons who have acquired the greateſt renown in the preſent or preceding ages? Who are the perſons who have been the greateſt objects of human admiration? Have they not been the moſt active, and the moſt ſucceſsful, deſtroyers of their fellow-creatures? This circum-

ſtance, indeed, communicates the guilt of individuals to the whole; ſhows that it belongs to mankind in general; and that the deſcription given by the apoſtle is not more ſhocking than true, ch. i. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do thoſe things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteouſneſs, fornication, wickedneſs, covetouſneſs, maliciouſneſs; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whiſperers, backbiters, haters of God, deſpiteful, proud, boaſters, inventors of evil things, diſobedient to parents, without underſtanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful; who knowing the judgement of God, (that they who do ſuch things are worthy of death), not only do the ſame, but have pleaſure in them that do them."

There are to be found upon record inſtances of ſuch dreadful and aggravated guilt, as it were to be wiſhed they had been, or could have been, buried in oblivion. For this reaſon, I ſhall neither mention their names, nor cite the examples; but obſerve, that the extent and prevalence of wickedneſs ſhould be conſidered as a ſtrong proof of the corruption of the whole race; and the particular ſignal inſtances of aſtoniſhing or monſtrous crimes, as a proof of the exceſſive depravation of our nature, and what man in his preſent ſtate is capable of. I know it is pleaſing and gratifying to human pride, to talk of the dignity of human nature, and the beauty of moral virtue; and if it be done in ſuch a manner as to make us eſteem the only means of

recovering our loſt integrity and original glory, I have no objection to it. But if it be ſpoken of man as he now is, without regenerating grace, I am certain it is more agreeable to reaſon and experience to ſay, that, from the lengths to which ſome have proceeded, when placed in circumſtances of temptation, it is owing to the power of reſtraining providence that others have been comparatively ſomewhat better.

I have ſeen it obſerved, with great apparent juſtice, that probably one end which God had in view when he ſhortened the period of human life after the deluge, was, to ſet bounds to the progreſs of human guilt. As it is the nature of vice to ſtrengthen by habit, and increaſe by time, a race of wicked men living many hundreds of years, would degenerate and harden to a degree not eaſily conceived. And indeed, if we examine into the true cauſes of any little degree of order and peace which we now enjoy, we ſhall ſee abundant reaſon to adore the wiſdom of Divine Providence, but very little to aſcribe much goodneſs to the human heart.

The moſt truly excellent characters which are to be found in hiſtory, and the moſt illuſtrious deeds which thoſe heroes have performed, have for their very foundation the corruption of the human race. In this remark I have in view the ſages and legiſlators of antiquity, who acquired ſo much renown by eſtabliſhing ſyſtems of policy and government for different ſtates. What was this elſe, and indeed what was it called, but taming the ſavage, and reſtraining the profligate part of their

fellow-creatures? It ſeems plainly to be the point in view in every human law, to bridle the fury of human inclination, and hinder one man from making a prey of another. This is well deſcribed by the apoſtle Paul, 1 Tim. i. 9. 10. "Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawleſs and diſobedient, for the ungodly and for ſinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for man-ſlayers, for whore-mongers, for them that defile themſelves with mankind, for men-ſtealers, for liars, for perjured perſons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to ſound doctrine." We have indeed the teſtimony of men againſt themſelves in this caſe. It has been found to hold, without any exception, that the longer men live, they have the greater ſuſpicion of thoſe with whom they live; the greater experience they have of the world, they have the harder thoughts of men in general. In particular, thoſe who have been moſt converſant in public life, and have obtained moſt of what is called a knowledge of the world, have always the worſt opinion of human nature.

2. Let us now, from a general, come to a particular and perſonal view of our preſent ſtate. You may be apt to ſuppoſe, that though the ſinfulneſs of human nature is too general, yet it is not univerſal; that though vice and wickedneſs have appeared conſpicuouſly, and though perhaps wicked men may have obtained the aſcendency in every nation, this will not ſerve to found a ſentence againſt every man. We might upon this part of the

ſubject obſerve, that the truth illuſtrated above will receive confirmation from our moſt intimate knowledge of one another. Human nature will gain nothing by a cloſe inſpection. Take it either in general or particular, its beſt appearance is when viewed at a diſtance. The greateſt and beſt characters, when cloſely examined, have always ſuch blemiſhes and imperfections attending them, as greatly diminiſh their luſtre. This indeed has grown into a proverb, That much familiarity breeds contempt. On this account we may ſafely ſay, that if ſuch is the ſtate of our nature, that no man is able to juſtify himſelf, or obtain the entire approbation of his fellow-ſinners; much more "muſt every mouth be ſtopped, and all the world become guilty before God," Rom. iii. 19.

But the chief illuſtration of this part of the ſubject, muſt be from the teſtimony which conſcience conſtrains every man to bear againſt himſelf. Examine, therefore, my brethren, what reaſon you have to be ſatisfied, that you yourſelves, unleſs your natures have been renewed by the Holy Ghoſt, are under the dominion of ſin; nay, that even ſuch as have been "brought again from the dead" do ſtill feel "a law in their members warring againſt the law of God in their minds." Remember, then, that you have to do with him "who ſeeth in ſecret," and "who ſearcheth Jeruſalem as with candles." It was neceſſary formerly to take notice of the enormous effects of ſin in this life; we muſt now ſearch a little deeper, and conſider the beginning and ſource of theſe in the diſpoſition of the heart. It is true, there are probably many here

who are justly chargeable with the grossest crimes; such as, impiety, lying, injustice, or uncleanness: and oh! that it may please God, that their sins may find them out, and his word may be quick and powerful to their conviction. But what I have now in view is, to maintain the universal conclusion in the text, not only that many men have been profligates, but that every man is a sinner.

For this purpose, it is of the utmost moment to put you in mind what sin properly is. There are two ways of defence, you know, upon any trial: the one is, to deny the fact; the other, to maintain it is no crime. It is of necessity, therefore, in the *first* place, to ascertain the charge, by an account of the nature of sin. Of this, I do not think there can be produced a juster account than we have in our Shorter Catechism: "Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of the law of God:" which is nothing else but a brief illustration of the words of scripture, "Sin is the transgression of the law." Let the conscience, then, of every hearer answer to the charge. Have you kept, or have you broken the law of God? Have you been obedient subjects to the King of kings? Have you done your own will, or the will of him that made you? However unwilling you may be to put this question home at present, no person shall be able to decline the tribunal, or evade the answer in the day of judgement.

We have one great difficulty to struggle with in the attempt of bringing the guilty to confession, that sin hath blinded the understanding, and perverted the judgement; so that after we have said

that sin is the transgression of the law, there will remain another question, What is the law, and how far doth it extend? Upon this we must have recourse to the remaining traces that are left upon the conscience; and I see nothing more proper than to press home that summary which God hath given of his own right and our duty, in the first and great commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," Matth. xxii. 37. Are you your own? Have you no lord over you? Can you plead any exception to this command? Is not your Maker infinitely perfect, and infinitely amiable? Is he not worthy of your supreme love? If he is not, who is it, or what is it, that you have reason to prefer, or that can produce a better title? Can there be any thing more just than the sentiment expressed by the pious Psalmist, Psal. lxxiii. 25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." Is there excellence or sweetness in the creature, and is there none, or less, in the Creator, from whom every inferior nature derives its very existence, and on whom it depends every moment for its preservation?

May I not hope to have some hold of sinners here, in pleading the rights of their Maker? Are your hearts, then, naturally, and have they been habitually and supremely set upon God? Has it been your first and leading care to know him, and to serve him, to inquire into his will, that you might do what was acceptable to him? Do you believe, that in his favour only is life, and therefore

do you ſeek your happineſs and your comfort in him? Many are apt greatly to miſtake upon this ſubject; nay, it ſeems to be the leading deception of ſinners, to think nothing evil or puniſhable, but ſuch groſs crimes as are diſorderly in human ſociety, and obnoxious to human laws. It is ſcarce poſſible to make them ſenſible how much guilt there is in a total forgetfulneſs of God; and yet this is the very ſource of human depravity. The chief thing blameable in our attachment to other things, is their filling the room that is due to God, their being employed in a manner that is diſhonourable to God, or, in other words, their being inſtruments of rebellion againſt the will of God.

Are there any of you, my brethren, who, by the kindneſs of Providence, have been kept free from groſs, viſible, and ſcandalous offences; who, from a natural coolneſs of temperament, have been chaſte or ſober; who, from a principle of honour, have been juſt or generous; who, from the dictates of prudence, have been regular and decent; but have been unmindful of your duty to God, have been unwilling to think of him, or ſtrangers to delight in him? and are you not ſinners in his preſence? Have you been preſerved by his power, and yet never confeſſed the obligation? Have you been living daily upon his bounty, and yet ſeldom or never given him thanks, except in the moſt indifferent and formal manner, and ſuch worſhip as is a much more proper occaſion for repentance than ground of confidence? How, then, ſhall you be able to ſtand in the judgement? "For of him,

and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

II. I COME now to make ſome practical improvement of what has been ſaid on this ſubject. And,

1. From what has been ſaid, you may learn how deeply and ſurely the foundation of the goſpel is laid. It is laid in the actual ſtate of the world, and in that depravity of our nature, which it is impoſſible to conceal, and which nothing but the greateſt obſtinacy and perverſion of mind can have the courage to deny. I am ſenſible, that nothing but an inward and perſonal conviction of guilt and miſery, wrought by the Spirit of the living God, will bring the ſinner to embrace the goſpel; yet the neceſſity of ſalvation may be evinced in the cleareſt and moſt ſatisfactory manner, by reaſon and obſervation. As the viſible creation, when attentively viewed, ſerves to diſcover the wiſdom and omnipotence of God, and is, as it were, an open volume, which men of every tongue may read and admire; ſo the ſtate of the moral world, as it is called, plainly points out the guilt and apoſtacy of man, and loudly calls for the interpoſition of the Saviour. This it is our duty to attend to, not only to ſtop the mouths of gainſayers, but to eſtabliſh the faith of God's children, that it may not be overthrown or unſettled by the cavils and objections of thoſe who lie in wait to deceive.

2. From what has been ſaid, you may ſee with what ſentiments we ſhould look upon the ſtate of the world, or peruſe the hiſtory of providence,

and what profit we may reap from it. When we ſee, as at preſent, in our own age and country, what profaneneſs and neglect of God, what contempt or deſertion of his worſhip, prevails among many of every rank; what pride and luxury, what riot and ſenſuality, what uncleanneſs and debauchery, what lying, fraud, and perjury; and when we obſerve how one race of ſinners has ſucceeded another in every age, and that true religion has been generally, as it is ſtill, in a ſtruggling or perſecuted ſtate, we ought to be humbled for the ſin of our nature, and the ſhare which each of us has contributed to the general guilt. Inſtead of finding fault with Providence for the permiſſion of ſin, we ought to be filled with a holy indignation againſt ourſelves and others for the perpetration of it. We ought to admire that wiſdom and power by which the King of kings ſets reſtraining bounds to the violence of men. Neither ought we to omit adoring his holineſs in the awful viſitations with which he ſometimes overtakes and overwhelms the wicked in their wickedneſs. When he ſends out his ſore judgements of war, famine, and peſtilence; or when he looks to the earth, and it trembles, as unable to bear all the guilt that is laid upon it; when thunder, lightning, and tempeſt, ſeem to threaten the immediate diſſolution of the whole fabric; we ought to conſider all theſe as the juſt puniſhment of ſin, and look forward with fear to that time, when he ſhall render to every man according to his works; and deſerved vengeance ſhall not be partial, but univerſal; when it ſhall not be occaſional

and temporary, but final, unchangeable, and eternal.

3. You may learn, from what has been said, the state and danger of those who are chargeable with sins of a heinous and aggravated nature. If all without exception are "under sin, if every mouth must be stopped," &c. what shall be the condition of those who have the shameful pre-eminence of being sinners of the first order, who have done more than others to provoke the Lord to anger? If those who have lived to themselves, and not to God, shall not be able to stand in the judgement; what shall become of those who have sold themselves to work iniquity, and whose abominable practices are a reproach to reason, as well as a scandal to religion? I may even say further, in the words of the apostle Peter, "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" 1 Pet. iv. 18. I do the rather beg your attention to this, that we always find loose livers the warmest advocates for libertine principles. It is the drunkard, the swearer, the impure fornicator, who are so ready to produce in conversation their pretended arguments against the corruption of human nature. I speak to all such within hearing. What benefit will you reap by denying original corruption, when you are justly chargeable with so many actual transgressions? If there are, or ever were, any person in the world without sin, surely you cannot pretend that you are so yourselves. You are ashamed to reveal your hidden scenes to your fellow-sinners; but how shall you conceal them from the Searcher of all hearts?

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If you cannot bear to be told your faults by your fellow-creatures, with what ſpeechleſs confuſion ſhall you ſtand at laſt before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt! Let me, therefore, addreſs you in the words of your Maker by the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. l. 21. 22. "Theſe things thou haſt done, and I kept ſilence: thou thoughteſt that I was altogether ſuch a one as thyſelf: but I will reprove thee, and ſet them in order before thine eyes. Now, conſider this, ye that forget God, leſt I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." May it pleaſe God effectually to convince you of your ſin and danger, and to lead you to his mercy, as revealed in the goſpel, for your forgiveneſs. I conclude with the advice of the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. ii. 12. "Kiſs the Son, leſt he be angry, and ye periſh from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Bleſſed are all they that put their truſt in him.'

SERMON II.

THE SINNER WITHOUT EXCUSE BEFORE GOD.

PSALM, CXXX. 3.

If thou, Lord, ſhouldſt mark iniquities, O Lord, who ſhall ſtand?

JUSTICE and MERCY are the perfections of the divine nature, in which we as ſinners have a peculiar concern. Our world is the great theatre, and the human race the great, or, ſo far as we know, the only objects of their united exerciſe. Clear and juſt apprehenſions, therefore, of thoſe attributes, muſt lie at the foundation of all religion. It is eaſy to ſee, that a diſcovery both of juſtice and mercy is neceſſary to bring the ſinner to repentance. He muſt ſee the guilt and miſery in which he is involved, and the way by which he may certainly, and by which he can only obtain a recovery. The ſame views are equally neceſſary to every Chriſtian, during his continuance in this imperfect ſtate. They are neceſſary to that ſelf-denial which ought to be his habitual character, and to that humiliation and penitence which ought to be his frequent employment.

I muſt, however, obſerve, that though there are few of the attributes of God more frequently ſpoken

of, perhaps there are few leſs diſtinctly underſtood. Men have either an imperfect knowledge or weak perſuaſion of the juſtice of God, and thence deſpiſe his mercy. On the other hand, they are apt to take preſumptuous views of his general mercy, and thence deſpiſe his juſtice and ſeverity. This is not peculiar to thoſe who, upon the whole, are under the dominion of ſin. Even the children of God themſelves are ready, either to loſe their views of the majeſty and holineſs of God, which ſhould incline them to ſerve him with reverence and godly fear; or, on the other hand, by neglecting his mercy, to fall into that ſtate of ſlaviſh bondage and illiberal fear, which is equally injurious to the honour of God, and hurtful to their own peace.

On theſe accounts I have choſen to inſiſt a little on this paſſage of the pſalmiſt David, in which we have an united view of divine juſtice and mercy: "If thou, Lord, ſhouldſt mark iniquities, O Lord, who ſhall ſtand? But there is forgiveneſs with thee, that thou mayeſt be feared." It is thought by ſome, that this pſalm was compoſed in that memorable period of his life, when he was plunged in the deepeſt guilt, by his adultery and murder in the matter of Uriah; but more commonly that it was in the time of his perſecution, when the imminent dangers to which he was ſo often expoſed brought his ſins ſtrongly to remembrance. Reſerving what is here ſaid of the mercy of God to another opportunity, let us now conſider the view given us of his juſtice, in this paſſage: "If thou,

Lord, ſhouldſt mark iniquities, O Lord, who ſhall ſtand?" For this purpoſe, I ſhall,

I. Endeavour to aſcertain and explain the meaning of the pſalmiſt's aſſertion.

II. Support and confirm it from ſcripture and experience.

III. In the *laſt* place, I ſhall make a practical improvement of what may be ſaid upon it.

I. LET us, then, *firſt*, endeavour to aſcertain and explain the meaning of the pſalmiſt's expreſſion, "If thou, Lord, ſhouldſt mark iniquities, O Lord, who ſhall ſtand?" Theſe words evidently carry in them the deepeſt ſenſe of ſin, a ſtrong and inward conviction of the impoſſibility of juſtifying himſelf before a pure and holy God, if he ſhould deal with him as in juſtice he might: "If thou, Lord, ſhouldſt mark iniquities, O Lord, who ſhall ſtand?" God is an omniſcient being, every where preſent, to whom all our thoughts and ways, and conſequently all our ſins, are and muſt be perfectly known. The expreſſion, then, cannot mean, that there are any ſins unregarded, or not obſerved of God; becauſe this is impoſſible. The marking of iniquities here, ſeems to be an alluſion to what paſſes in human courts, where the judges ſet down or put upon record all that is brought againſt the criminal, in order to found a ſentence of condemnation. In this view, the meaning muſt be, if God ſhould ſo mark iniquities as to proceed to puniſh us for all of which we were really guilty, there could be no poſſibility of ſtanding ſuch an impartial trial.

I need not tell you, that the putting the words in the form of a queſtion, "O Lord, who ſhall ſtand?" does not imply that there is any uncertainty in the matter, or that any can be found pure enough to endure ſuch a ſcrutiny, but rather ſerves to deny it in the ſtrongeſt manner. Again, we are not to ſuppoſe, that the pſalmiſt, by putting the queſtion thus in general, "Who ſhall ſtand?" deſigned to turn the accuſation from himſelf, or to extenuate his own ſins, by bringing in others equally guilty. This is indeed the practice of many in the world, who ſeem to think the number of thoſe who are chargeable with any ſin, an excuſe or palliation of the guilt of particular offenders. But the true ſpirit of repentance leads to very different ſentiments: it makes the ſinner fix upon his own faults, and point at the ſins and plagues of his own heart, without thinking upon the ſins of others, unleſs as they may be an occaſion of diſcovering to him more of the depravation and wickedneſs of his own nature. So that the general import of the pſalmiſt's expreſſion ſeems to be, If thou, Lord, ſhouldſt execute the decrees of juſtice, and puniſh every thing that is done amiſs, the holieſt man on earth would not be able to abide the trial; how much leſs would ſuch a ſinner as I be able to ſtand?

II. I PROCEED now to ſupport and confirm this truth from ſcripture and experience. And you will be pleaſed to obſerve, that it is the conſtant doctrine of the holy ſcriptures; it is the uniform language of humility and penitence there. Thus the pſalmiſt, Pſal. cxliii. 2. "Enter not into judgment with

thy ſervant: for in thy ſight ſhall no man living be juſtified." To the ſame purpoſe, ſee the language of Job, ch. ix. 2. 3. 4. "I know it is ſo of a truth: but how ſhould man be juſt with God? If he will contend with him, he cannot anſwer him one of a thouſand. He is wiſe in heart, and mighty in ſtrength: who hath hardened himſelf againſt him, and hath proſpered?" A clear diſcovery of the infinite majeſty of God, the unſpotted holineſs of his nature, the extent, the purity, and ſpirituality of his law, will immediately carry home a conviction of the truth, and make us ſenſible what impure and wretched creatures we are: it will make every one of us cry out with Job, after a diſcovery of the divine glory and perfection, ch. xl. 4. 5. "Behold, I am vile, what ſhall I anſwer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I ſpoken, but I will not anſwer: yea, twice, but I will proceed no further." And again, ch. xlii. 5. 6. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye ſeeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myſelf, and repent in duſt and aſhes." Every true penitent will ſay, with the pſalmiſt, Pſal. xix. 12. "Who can underſtand his errors? cleanſe thou me from ſecret faults." Nay, he will conſider his daily preſervation as an evidence of the divine patience, in the ſuſpenſion of his ſentence; as in Lamentations, iii. 22. 23. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not conſumed, becauſe his compaſſions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulneſs."

Theſe, my brethren, are examples of the ſentiments and language of the ſcripture-ſaints; and if

we look a little into their characters, as set before us in the inspired writings, we shall see, that self-abasement is one of the most certain proofs of true religion; that the more any person has made real improvement in holiness, he will think and speak in so much the humbler manner; will more clearly see the evil of sin, and more readily confess its power and influence over his own heart. I know this is very contrary to the spirit that prevails in the world; and particularly opposite to the reigning temper of the present age. I know also that there are many objections raised against this fundamental truth. But instead of wrangling controversy, in which our understandings are often lost, and our passions irritated, rather than subdued; for further inforcing the above truth, I shall only urge every hearer to a serious and impartial reflection upon his own conduct. This, I am persuaded, will, by the blessing of God, be the most effectual means of silencing the reasonings of the carnal mind, and forcing the conscience to a confession, both of the equity of the law, and the guilt of disobedience.

For attaining this end, I shall just propose three general subjects of examination; and beg that you may show fidelity to your own souls, in bringing them to the trial. 1. How many duties have you omitted, which you must be sensible you ought to have performed? 2. How often have you been guilty of express transgressions of the law of God? 3. How many blemishes and imperfections cleave to those very duties which you endeavour to perform in obedience to his will?

1. Then, How many duties have you omitted, which you must be sensible you ought to have performed? In charging you with neglect of duty, I must begin with unthankfulness and forgetfulness of God. Let the conscience be ever so much biassed by partiality, or perverted by wrong principles, is it possible to deny the obligation of every creature to acknowledge his dependence upon the author of his being, the preserver of his life, and the source of his mercies? But have you, my brethren, been sensible of this? How unmindful have you been of the Rock that begat you, and the God that formed you? This is the first of all sins, and the fruitful parent of every particular transgression. It was a heavy charge brought against a great prince by the prophet Daniel, ch. v. 23. last clause, "And the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified." Say, ye men of the world, have you indeed acknowledged God, on whom you depend for every breath that you draw, for every moment that you continue in existence? I have often thought that it was one of the greatest evidences of the depravity of human nature, that an abundant and opulent state on earth should so generally lead to neglect of God. What is this, when interpreted, if I may speak so, but that the greater our Maker's goodness is to us, commonly the less is our gratitude to him?

But I would speak to those whose consciences are more enlightened, and who have not wholly forgotten the Lord. Are not you also chargeable with manifold omissions? What sense of gratitude have you retained, and expressed, for innumerable mer-

cies, ſpiritual and temporal, to yourſelves and to your families? How unequal the payment of gratitude to the debt of obligation? What uſe have you made of them in God's ſervice? What advantage have you reaped, for your own ſanctification, from the bounty of Providence, from the ſtrokes of Providence, from the ordinances of divine inſtitution, from the truths of the everlaſting goſpel, from ſeaſons of inſtruction, and opportunities of worſhip, from edifying examples, from faithful admonitions? What have you done for the good of others? How often have you relieved the neceſſitous, comforted the diſtreſſed, inſtructed the ignorant, admoniſhed the negligent, puniſhed or reſtrained the profane? I hope I ſpeak to many who have not been wholly negligent in improving their time and their talents; yet ſurely there is juſt ground of humiliation to the beſt, that, even under a conviction of duty, they have ſo imperfectly diſcharged it; and probably the very perſons who have done moſt, will be moſt ſincerely grieved that they have not done more.

Alas! my brethren, it is a great miſtake to think light of ſins of omiſſion. How much do I pity the condition of thoſe thoughtleſs perſons, who, forgetting that they were made to ſerve God, ſeem to live for no other purpoſe than to enjoy themſelves! And O the miſerable deluſion of thoſe ſinners who ſet their minds at eaſe by the ſilly excuſe, That they do harm to none but themſelves! Let them hear and tremble at the tenor of the ſentence in the great day, Matth. xxv. 30. "Caſt ye the unprofitable ſervant into utter darkneſs: there

ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth." It is the firſt duty of natural religion, "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name;" and it is the ſum of all the duties of the goſpel, 1 Cor. vi. 19. 20. "Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your ſpirit, which are God's."

2. Conſider in how many inſtances you have been guilty of expreſs tranſgreſſions of the law of God, his law written upon your hearts, and repeated in his own word. If you know any thing at all of the law of God in its ſpirituality and extent, you muſt be deeply convinced of your innumerable tranſgreſſions, in thought, in word, and in deed. (1.) How many are the ſins of your thoughts? Sin is ſeated in the heart: it hath its throne and dominion there. Every enormity in the life takes its riſe from the impurity of the heart. None will think light of ſins of the heart, who have any acquaintance with the word of God. Let them but reflect upon the account given of the guilt of the old world, Gen. vi. 5. "And God ſaw that the wickedneſs of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Let them reflect upon the ſaying of the wiſe man, Prov. iv. 23. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the iſſues of life;" Jer. xvii. 10. "I the Lord ſearch the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."

How many thoughts are there in your hearts, admitted and entertained, diſhonourable to God,

unthankful for his mercies, impatient under his providence? How many thoughts, envious, malicious, ſpiteful, towards your neighbour? How many wanton laſcivious thoughts, and irregular deſires? How many covetous, worldly, vain, ambitious thoughts? Let me beſeech you alſo to conſider, that theſe are not ſins that we fall into ſeldom, or by occaſional temptation, but multitudes break in upon us every day, and in a manner every hour. What an infinite number, then, muſt we be chargeable with in twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years! If ſo many are the ſins of a ſingle day, what muſt be the guilt of a whole life? What reaſon to cry out, with the prophet to Jeruſalem, "How long ſhall vain thoughts lodge within us?"

(2.) Let me beſeech you to conſider the ſins of the tongue. Here I ſhall not inſiſt much on the groſſer ſins of the tongue, lying, ſlandering, backbiting; of theſe, though few will be ſenſible they are guilty themſelves, all are abundantly ready to complain, as reigning in the world in general. Neither ſhall I inſiſt on impure converſation, filthy and laſcivious expreſſions, or alluſions to obſcenity; though I am afraid many here preſent are far from being innocent of the charge. But beſides theſe, the ſins of the tongue are ſo many, that the moſt watchful Chriſtian cannot ſay he is guiltleſs. Even the meek Moſes was provoked to ſpeak "unadviſedly with his lips." The apoſtle James has given us a very ſtrong deſcription, both of the general prevalence, and miſchievous influence of the ſins of the tongue, James, iii. 2.—8. "For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the

ſame is a perfect man, and able alſo to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horſes mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold alſo the ſhips, which though they be ſo great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very ſmall helm, whitherſoever the governor liſteth. Even ſo the tongue is a little member, and boaſteth great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth. And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: ſo is the tongue amongſt our members, that it defileth the whole body, and ſetteth on fire the courſe of nature; and it is ſet on fire of hell. For every kind of beaſts, and of birds, and of ſerpents, and things in the ſea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: but the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poiſon." And that none may preſume, after all, to think theſe ſins of the tongue inconſiderable, let us remember what our Saviour tells us, Matth. xii. 36. 37. "But I ſay unto you, That every idle word that men ſhall ſpeak, they ſhall give an account thereof in the day of judgement. For by thy words thou ſhalt be juſtified, and by thy words thou ſhalt be condemned."

(3.) Now, to theſe ſins of heart and converſation, let us add the conſideration of all the ſins of our actions, by which we either offend God ourſelves, or are the means, by a doubtful or ſuſpicious example, of inducing others to offend him: all the acts of inſobriety and intemperance with regard to ourſelves; of injuſtice, treachery, or oppreſſion, with regard to others. Let us conſider thoſe ſins

to which we are led by our reſpective callings and employments, or by our reſpective ages or tempers, or by ſituation, and the ſociety with which we ſtand connected. The lightneſs and frothineſs of ſome, the ſourneſs and moroſeneſs of others, the inconſiderateneſs and folly of youth, the plotting and ambitious projects of riper years, the peeviſhneſs and covetouſneſs of old age, and the vanity and ſelfiſhneſs we carry with us through the ſeveral ſtages and periods of life. Theſe things are moſt, if not all of them, ſins in themſelves, and do infallibly betray us into a great number of others. If we conſider all this with any meaſure of attention, can we refuſe to adopt the language of the holy ſcripture, that our ſins are more in number than the hairs upon our heads, or than the ſand that is upon the ſea-ſhore? In fine, if we conſider the ſins we are guilty of, according to our conditions and relations in the world, as huſbands and wives, parents and children, maſters and ſervants, magiſtrates and ſubjects, miniſters and people, we ſhall find the account ſo prodigiouſly ſwelled, that we ſhall have more than reaſon to cry out, with the pſalmiſt, "Lord, if thou ſhouldſt mark iniquities, O Lord, who ſhall ſtand?"

3. Conſider the ſins that cleave even to your religious duties, and every thing you do in obedience to the will of God. The pureſt worſhipper on earth muſt aſk forgiveneſs for the ſins even of his holy things. I am not here to inſiſt upon the hypocritical performances of many profeſſing Chriſtians, done merely, or chiefly, to be ſeen of men, or ſpread, as a covering, over their hidden and

ſhameful deeds; nor am I to mention that religious zeal which ariſes from ſtrife, contention, and vain-glory, and which chiefly aims at the ſupport of party-names; becauſe theſe are directly and eminently ſinful: they are an abomination in the ſight of God. But, my brethren, even in thoſe performances which you go about with ſome meaſure of ſincerity, how many defects are to be found! Oh! how much negligence, coldneſs, and formality, in worſhip! how many wandering, vain, idle, and worldly thoughts, in your hearts, when your bodies are in the houſe of God! Conſider only the infinite glory and majeſty of God, in whoſe ſight the heavens themſelves are not clean, and who charges his angels with folly; and ſay, whether you have ever prayed at all with becoming reverence of ſpirit. Conſider only the unſpeakable condeſcenſion of that God to his creatures, and the unſearchable riches of his grace to the ſinner; and ſay, whether your hearts have ever been ſuitably affected with his love.

It is our duty, my brethren, to conſider how far we have been from preaching the word of God with proper impreſſions of the majeſty of him in whoſe name we ſpeak; how far we have done it with ſimplicity and dignity, neither fearing the cenſure, nor courting the applauſe, of our fellow-ſinners; how far we have done it with that tenderneſs and affection, with that holy fervour and importunity, which the value of thoſe precious ſouls to whom we ſpeak manifeſtly demands. And is it not your buſineſs to conſider, how ſeldom you hear with that attention, reverence, humility, and love, with

which the ſacred and important truths of the everlaſting goſpel ought to be received; how many hear much more as judges than as learners, as critics rather than as ſinners; and content themſelves with marking the weakneſs of an indifferent, or praiſing the abilities of an animated ſpeaker; and how many run with itching ears from one congregation to another, or even from one party or profeſſion to another, not that they may be edified, but that curioſity and fancy may be gratified? How many loſt ordinances, how many miſ-ſpent Sabbaths have we to lament before God!

When we come to the ſecond table of the law, how many ſinful motives mix their influence in the duties we perform to our neighbours! how many acts of juſtice owe their being, in part at leaſt, to fear of reproach! how many works of charity owe their ſplendour to a deſire of applauſe, as well as to a better principle? I ſhould never have done, were I to go through all the great duties of the Chriſtian life, and obſerve the ſinful defects that cleave to them. I believe I may ſay with great truth, that would we but deal faithfully, there would be no more neceſſary to our humiliation, than a ſtrict examination of our duties themſelves. This would oblige us to confeſs, that "all our righteouſneſſes are as filthy rags before God;" that we muſt not plead for reward, but forgiveneſs; that no merit of our own, but infinite mercy alone, muſt be the foundation of our hope.

III. I COME now to make ſome practical application of the ſubject, for your inſtruction and di-

rection. And, 1. How great is the deceitfulness of sin! how astonishing the blindness of sinners! How easy and obvious is the consideration of our sins, in the order in which I have endeavoured to set them before you! Sins of omission on the one hand, and of commission on the other; and duties faulty in both respects, viz. by essential qualities neglected, and sins mixed with the performance: sins in thought, in word, and in deed, against God, our neighbour, and ourselves. Yet, alas! how many are there in a great measure ignorant of the sins they are chargeable with, and therefore sleeping in security! Think, my beloved hearers, on your condition. To know your danger, is the first step to deliverance. Is not the law of obedience clear, written upon all the Creator's works? Is it not engraven upon the conscience? and is it not often repeated and inforced by the dispensations of providence? Would there be so much of divine judgement, if there was no offence? Every natural evil proclaims the sin of man. An inclement season, an injurious world, and a frail dying body, conspire in pointing out our sinful state. And yet, after all, how blind is the sinner to the discovery, how deaf to the friendly warning, how regardless of the approaching trial! Awake, I beseech you, while there may be peace, and look upon your danger, while there is yet given you time and opportunity to fly from it.

2. If the holiest cannot stand before God, if no flesh living can be justified in his sight, how fearful must be the state of those who are lying under the guilt of atrocious, aggravated, and repeated crimes!

Though great profligates often desert the ordinances of God, that they may sin at greater ease, and meet with less resistance; yet, in so numerous an assembly as this, there is reason to suppose there are not a few of the *chief of sinners*; the rather, that while some desert the ordinances, that they may have ease from within, others attend them as a cover, that they may blind their neighbours, and meet with less suspicion or disturbance from without. How, then, can murderers, fornicators, swearers, drunkards, thieves, and retainers of unjust gain, hear what hath been said on this subject without trembling for themselves! Hear for your souls sake; hear for eternity's sake; hear, I beseech you, for Christ's sake. O that the Spirit of God may carry home the truth, and make it "quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword," Heb. iv. 12. It is an easy thing for you now to dissemble the sins which men would punish, and even to boast of the sins which men must tolerate; but hear and remember the two following passages: Heb. iv. 13. "All things are naked, and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do;" and, Heb. x. 31. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

3. In the *last* place, If any Christian desires to keep his conscience tender and faithful, to have a deep, growing and humbling sense of his own sinfulness; if he would bar the gate against the entrance of pride, or banish it after it has obtained admission; if he desires to walk humbly and watchfully, let him live as in the presence of God, let him often sift himself

at his awful tribunal. It is eaſy to juſtify ourſelves before men, who have ſo little to require, and from whom ſo much may be concealed. The truth is, it is not a great matter to be able to ſet the world at defiance. But to look up to that God who ſitteth upon the throne of his holineſs, is of infinitely greater moment, and of infinitely greater difficulty. He trieth the reins and the heart. He abhorreth evil. You ſee how Job defended himſelf againſt the accuſations of his friends, held faſt his integrity, and would not let it go; but no ſooner did God ſpeak to him in the greatneſs of his power, than he confeſſed his vileneſs, and laid his hand upon his mouth. In the ſame manner, he that would guard againſt the impoſitions of a deceitful heart, that would not be abuſed by flattering friends, or led aſtray by a miſtaken world; that would rather walk in the path of penitence than ſecurity; let him live as in the preſence of God. And happy, happy they, who take confuſion of face to themſelves now, and ſeek for mercy through the blood of the atonement, in compariſon of thoſe who juſtify themſelves now, but ſhall ſtand at laſt with unutterable confuſion before the Supreme Judge, ready to pronounce the irreverſible ſentence.

SERMON III.

HOPE OF FORGIVENESS WITH GOD.

PSALM CXXX. 4.

But there is forgiveneſs with thee; that thou mayest be feared.

AFTER conſidering our own miſerable and guilty ſtate, and how little any plea which we can offer will avail before the holineſs and juſtice of God, it is proper to turn our eyes to his mercy, as the only foundation of our hope and peace. This is of the utmoſt neceſſity to every penitent. When a ſenſe of ſin hath truly taken hold of the conſcience, it is ſo intolerable, that no man can continue long in that condition. When the waves and billows of divine wrath are going over him, he muſt either faſten upon ſome ground of hope, or ſuffer ſhipwreck upon the rocks of deſpair. There are indeed (alas that we ſhould be ſo liable to deluſion!) many ways of weakening the force of conviction, and obtaining a temporary, imperfect, or falſe peace. But the only ſafe and

ſtable ground of hope is the divine mercy. And happy the ſinner who obtains ſuch diſcoveries of its extent and efficacy, as to make him cleave to it with undivided affection, and reſt upon it as the anchor of his ſoul, from which he is reſolved never to depart.

Believe it, Chriſtians, the more the ſinner looks into his own ſtate, the more real and thorough his acquaintance with his own heart is, the more he finds that not the leaſt ray of hope can ariſe from that quarter. This is preciſely the import of the pſalmiſt's declaration in this paſſage, taking the one branch of it in connection with the other; as if he had ſaid, When I conſider how great and multiplied my tranſgreſſions have been, I muſt ſtand ſpeechleſs, and without excuſe, before thy holy tribunal, and juſtify thee, although thou ſhouldſt condemn me. But, Lord, thou art a God of infinite mercy. This I fix upon as the foundation of my hope. I ſee nothing in myſelf to plead. Thy law accuſes me. My own conſcience paſſes ſentence upon me. I am not able to ſupport the view of thy juſtice and holineſs. Whither, then, can I fly, but to thy mercy? Here I deſire to take refuge, and to my unſpeakable conſolation, there is forgiveneſs with thee; ſo that thou mayeſt and oughteſt to be feared.—In diſcourſing further on this ſubject, which I intend to do in a manner entirely practical, I propoſe, in a dependence on divine grace, to follow this method.

I. I ſhall give a brief view of the diſcoveries which God hath made of his mercy, as the foundation of the ſinner's hope; or, in other words, ſhow

what reaſon we have to believe that there is forgiveneſs with him.

II. I ſhall point out the connection between the mercy of God and his fear; or explain the import of this expreſſion, "There is forgiveneſs with thee, that thou mayeſt be feared."

III. I ſhall make ſome practical improvement of the ſubject.

I. First, then, let us attempt to give a brief view of the diſcoveries which God hath made of his mercy, as the foundation of the ſinner's hope; or, in other words, ſhew what reaſon we have to believe, that there is forgiveneſs with him. For this purpoſe, I obſerve, firſt of all, that the patience and forbearance of God towards ſinners, in the courſe of his providence, is the effect of his mercy. Even this affords ſome faint hope, that there may be forgiveneſs with him. See the reaſoning, or the expoſtulation of Jonah on the reſpite of the deſtruction of Nineveh, Jonah, iv. 2. "And he prayed unto the Lord, and ſaid, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my ſaying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarſhiſh; for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, ſlow to anger, and of great kindneſs, and repenteſt thee of the evil." The ſentence being ſuſpended, there is time given to apply for pardon, and ſpace for the exerciſe of repentance, with a peradventure, or who can tell, whether he may not be gracious. We may add to this, his continual benignity and kindneſs to all his creatures, not excepting the evil, the unthankful, and the unholy. The native ten-

dency of both these is to lead the guilty to repentance; as we are told, Rom. ii. 4. "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" But though this ought to be mentioned, I am very sensible how insufficient it is of itself to give consolation to a wounded spirit. Taking in the whole plan of providence, there are so many tokens of our Creator's displeasure, so much to be seen of the justice and holiness, as well as of the goodness of God, that it must leave the sinner still under a dreadful uncertainty in a matter of such infinite concern. Torn by the suspicion which is inseparable from guilt, he is full of restless anxiety; and knowing that he must shortly appear before God in an unembodied state, he is often putting this question to himself, Wherewith shall I come before the Lord? How shall I be able to stand in the judgement? And therefore,

2. God hath revealed himself in his word, as merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and slow to anger. This was the great truth on which the sinner's hope depended ever since the apostacy of our first parents. Never since that time could any man produce his title to divine favour in his own obedience; and therefore the mercy of God, early intimated in the first promise, continued to make, if I may speak so, the leading part of the divine character in all the discoveries he made of himself. Thus, at the giving of the law, Exod. xxxiv. 5. 6. 7. "And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and

proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodneſs and truth; keeping mercy for thouſands, forgiving iniquity, and tranſgreſſion, and ſin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; viſiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the childrens children, unto the third and to the fourth generation." To the ſame purpoſe the pſalmiſt David, Pſal. ciii. 8. "The Lord is merciful and gracious, ſlow to anger, and plenteous in mercy." Hear alſo the prophet Micah; Micah, vii. 18. "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and paſſeth by the tranſgreſſion of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, becauſe he delighteth in mercy."

I do not here ſtay to conſider what hints were given in the ancient diſpenſation, of the atonement which was afterwards to be made by the incarnation of the Saviour. Doubtleſs there was ſome reſpect to this in the very firſt promiſe of the *ſeed of the woman*, and alſo in the promiſe to Abraham, that in his *ſeed* all nations of the earth ſhould be bleſſed. The ſame thing was prefigured by the ſacrifices, and ſhadowed out by many different rites of the Moſaic œconomy. It muſt, however, be allowed, that the faithful in thoſe ages ſaw it only obſcurely, and of conſequence underſtood it very imperfectly. But it was on the revealed mercy of God, which they were obliged to ſeek in the way appointed by himſelf, that they placed their entire dependence.

I cannot help obſerving to you, how very encouraging the aſſurances of pardon are through many paſſages of the Old Teſtament; how very gracious

the invitations to the ſinner, as if they had been contrived on purpoſe to remove the jealouſy which the guilty are too apt to entertain: Iſ. i. 18. "Come now, and let us reaſon together, ſaith the Lord: though your ſins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall be as white as ſnow; though they be red like crimſon, they ſhall be as wool." Iſ. xliii. 25. "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy tranſgreſſions for mine own ſake, and will not remember thy ſins." Iſ. xliv. 22. "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy tranſgreſſions, and, as a cloud, thy ſins: return unto me, for I have redeemed thee." Iſ. lv. 1. "Ho, every one that thirſteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price." Is this the word of God? Are theſe paſſages written for our benefit? Is there any thing more plain, than that God is merciful and gracious; nay, that he delighteth in mercy? How great encouragement is this to the exerciſe of repentance? In this very view, indeed, it is urged by the prophet in the 6th and 7th verſes of the laſt-cited chapter, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forſake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

I ſhall only add, that as the ſcripture every where bears teſtimony to the readineſs of God to pardon returning ſinners, ſo there are alſo many paſſages in which he declares his readineſs to pardon the failings which continue to cleave to his own peo-

ple, and treat them with the utmoſt tenderneſs and grace: Pſal. ciii. 13. "Like as a father pitieth his children, ſo the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Iſ. xl. 11. "He ſhall feed his flock like a ſhepherd: he ſhall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his boſom, and ſhall gently lead thoſe that are with young." Mal. iii. 17. "And they ſhall be mine, ſaith the Lord of hoſts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will ſpare them as a man ſpareth his own ſon that ſerveth him."

3. But that nothing may be wanting for the complete illuſtration of this truth, obſerve, that it appears in the cleareſt manner from the goſpel of Chriſt, that there is forgiveneſs with God. In the fulneſs of time, God ſent his own Son in our nature, to be a victim and ſacrifice for our offences, to bear our ſins in his own body on the tree. In this aſtoniſhing event, indeed, the love and mercy of God ſhines with the brighteſt luſtre: John, iii. 16. "God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth on him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life." In this great tranſaction, we have not only an aſſurance of obtaining, but ſee the price paid for the purchaſe of our pardon: 1 Pet. i. 18. "For ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as ſilver and gold, from your vain converſation received by tradition from your fathers." Inſtead of finding the juſtice of God ſtand in the way of our reconciliation and peace, juſtice, being fully ſatisfied, ſeals the pardon, and adds to the comfort of the ſinner. In the infinite value of this atonement, we

may see the extent of the divine mercy. In the infinite power of this Saviour, we may see the perfect security of those who put their trust in him. Salvation, in all its parts, is offered to the chief of sinners; so that, as the apostle expresses it, Heb. vi. 18. "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

II. I PROCEED now to the *second* thing proposed; which was, to point out the connection between the mercy of God and his fear, or explain the import of this expression, "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." The import of this expression must be a little different, as we understand the word *fear*, which is sometimes taken in a larger, and sometimes in a more limited sense. Sometimes, as being so eminent a part, it is made use of to signify the whole of religion; sometimes it signifies that awe and veneration of the sacred majesty of God, with which every one of his servants ought to be habitually possessed. I shall briefly consider it in both these views, there not being the least opposition between them, and both carrying in them the most important and salutary instruction.

If we take the fear of God in the text to signify the whole of that duty and obedience we owe to him, then the connection between forgiveness with God and his being feared, appears from these two considerations.

1. A discovery of the mercy of God is absolutely necessary to his being loved and served by those who have once been sinners. Despair of mercy drives the sinner from God, presents him only as the object of terror and aversion; and, instead of having the least influence in bringing us to obedience, confirms the guilty in his rebellious opposition to his Maker. This must be manifest to every hearer. There can be no religion at all, either in inclination or performance, if there be no forgiveness with God. How should any so much as attempt what they believe to be an unprofitable labour?

Though this is a truth which none will deny, I am afraid it is a truth not sufficiently attended to, either in its certainty or influence. It tends greatly to illustrate the whole plan of salvation, by the riches of divine grace, or the free, unmerited, unsolicited, love of God. How much does it add to the beauty and meaning of several passages of scripture! as, 1 John, iv. 10. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Rom. v. 8. "But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." And the 10th verse of the same chapter, "If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Guilt is of a suspicious nature. It is even observed in offences committed by one man against another, that he who hath done the injury is always hardest to be reconciled. The same

thing appears very plainly in the diſpoſition of ſinners towards God. A gloomy fear, a deſpondent terror, greatly hinders their return to him; nor can they ever take one ſtep towards him, till, by the diſplay of his mercy, this inſuperable obſtruction is removed.

2. As a diſcovery of the mercy of God is abſolutely neceſſary to our ſerving him at all, ſo it is perhaps of all others the moſt powerful motive to induce us to ſerve him in ſincerity. Nothing whatever more illuſtrates the divine glory. It preſents him as the proper object of worſhip, of confidence, and of love. When a ſinner is once burdened with a ſenſe of guilt, ſees the demerit of his tranſgreſſions, and feels the juſtice of his own ſentence, what an inconceivable relief muſt it give him to ſee the divine mercy! and how infinitely amiable muſt this God of mercy appear in his eyes! Others may reaſon at their eaſe upon the ſubject, he is tranſported with unſpeakable joy on the proſpect. His heart is immediately taken captive: he feels its conſtraining power, and yields himſelf willingly to every demand of duty and gratitude. See, to this purpoſe, the expreſſions of the prophet Hoſea, ch. xi. 4. "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love; and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them." The ſame thing is every where in the New Teſtament repreſented as the great commanding principle of obedience, 2 Cor. v. 14. "For the love of Chriſt conſtraineth us, becauſe we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." 1 John, iv. 16. "And we have known and believed the

love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." And verſe 19. of the ſame chapter, "We love him, becauſe he firſt loved us."

But further, even taking fear in a more limited ſenſe, as ſignifying a holy reverence and dread of the power and majeſty of God, there being forgiveneſs with him, is ſo far from weakening, that it ſtrengthens this fear; and that on the two following accounts.

1. The infinite obligations we lie under to divine mercy, muſt ſerve to improve our ſenſe of the evil of ſin, as committed againſt ſo good and ſo gracious a God, and to increaſe our abhorrence of it. The mercy of God to the guilty, at the ſame time that it brings unſpeakable conſolation, as delivering them from the wrath to come, ſerves to humble them, by a view of their own unworthy and undutiful conduct. When an awakened convinced ſoul, under the apprehenſion of eternity approaching, begins to contemplate the mercy of God as the ground of forgiveneſs, he immediately thinks upon this mercy, as having all along ſpared him in the midſt of his provocations. 'What a wonder of mercy is it,' does he ſay to himſelf, 'that I was not immediately cut off in my wickedneſs, at ſuch a time, or at ſuch a time,' which now return full upon his memory! He cannot eaſily ſeparate the remembrance of paſt crimes from the mercy that with-held immediate vengeance. And ſurely nothing will ſerve more to make the ſinner tremble and ſtand aſtoniſhed at his own guilt, than reflection on that forbearance of a patient God, which

did not doom him to inſtant and deſerved deſtruction, but ſpared him to hear the glad tidings of peace.

Thus the unſpeakable grace of God in the goſpel opens the ſprings of penitential ſorrow, and makes them flow more ſweetly indeed, but more freely, and more copiouſly, than before. You may obſerve the ſtrong picture of penitence and love, which is drawn with inimitable beauty by the evangeliſt Luke, ch. vii. 37. 38. "And behold, a woman in the city, which was a ſinner, when ſhe knew that Jeſus ſat at meat in the Phariſee's houſe, brought an alabaſter-box of ointment, and ſtood at his feet behind him, weeping, and began to waſh his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kiſſed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment." Was it not in grace and mercy that the ſuffering Saviour looked upon Peter, which immediately confounded him? Luke, xxii. 61. 62. "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter; and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had ſaid unto him, Before the cock crow, thou ſhalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out and wept bitterly." What is it elſe that is repreſented by the prophet, as having ſo ſtrong an effect upon the believer in producing penitential ſorrow, but the love of our Redeemer? Zech. xii. 10. "And I will pour upon the houſe of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, the ſpirit of grace of ſupplications, and they ſhall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they ſhall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only

ſon, and ſhall be in bitterneſs for him, as one that is in bitterneſs for his firſt-born."

2. Forgiveneſs with God tends to increaſe our fear and reverence of him, from the manner in which, and the condition on which, it is beſtowed. Every circumſtance of this diſpenſation of divine mercy is calculated to abaſe the ſinner, and leave him nothing whereof to glory before God. Forgiveneſs is always declared to be an act of ſovereign grace: If. xliii. 25. "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy tranſgreſſions for mine own ſake, and will not remember thy ſins." We are many times cautioned againſt imputing to ourſelves, or our own merit, what is merely the effect of divine mercy. If the ſcripture is read with care, there will be obſerved many paſſages which carry this inſtruction in them, to beware of taking merit to ourſelves from the divine goodneſs, or any effect or expreſſion of it: Deut. ix. 4. 5. "Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the Lord thy God hath caſt them out from before thee, ſaying, For my righteouſneſs the Lord hath brought me in to poſſeſs this land: but for the wickedneſs of theſe nations the Lord doth drive them out from before thee. Not for thy righteouſneſs, or for the uprightneſs of thine heart, doſt thou go to poſſeſs their land: but for the wickedneſs of theſe nations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the Lord ſware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob." Ezek. xxxvi. 21. 22. "But I had pity for mine holy name, which the houſe of Iſrael had profaned among the heathen, whither they went. There-

fore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went."

It is probably also with this view, if we may presume to offer an opinion on so deep a subject, that the objects of special mercy are sometimes chosen from among the most criminal, even the chief of sinners. Does not this forbid, in the strongest terms, every man to harbour the least thought, as if by his own righteousness, or being comparatively less wicked than others, he had been entitled to the divine favour? Rom. ix. 15. — 18. "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."

But the circumstance on which we are called chiefly to fix our attention, is, that forgiveness is bestowed only through the blood of Christ. It is freely and graciously bestowed upon the sinner, but was dearly and hardly purchased by the Surety. This is no new or unusual subject in this congregation. But O! my brethren, that we could in some measure apprehend its infinite importance.

Think, I beſeech you, on the holineſs and juſtice of God, as they ſhine in the ſufferings and croſs of Chriſt; that a righteous God required full ſatisfaction for ſin; that "the Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all;" that "it pleaſed the Lord to bruiſe him, and to put him to grief." Are not the majeſty and purity of God ſet forth in this tranſaction, in the moſt clear and legible, nay in the moſt awful and terrible characters? for they are written in blood. Is the Lord to be praiſed for his mercy? and is he not alſo to be feared for his juſtice? May we not, or rather muſt we not ſay, "If ſuch things were done in the green tree, what ſhall be done in the dry?" If God ſaw it neceſſary to lay ſuch a load of wrath upon the Holy One, when ſtanding in the room of ſinners, what ſhall be the condition of the impenitent tranſgreſſors, who ſhall lie under it for ever? We may well adopt the words of Moſes to the children of Iſrael, Deut. xxviii. 58. 59. "If thou wilt not obſerve to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayeſt fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD; then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy ſeed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and ſore ſickneſſes, and of long continuance."

Do you not now, my brethren, ſee much propriety, as well as inſtruction, in this language, "But there is forgiveneſs with thee, that thou mayeſt be feared?" The expreſſion indeed is not ſingular in the holy ſcripture, even in the ſenſe now illuſtrated. It is certainly on the ſame ſubject the

pſalmiſt is ſpeaking, when he ſays, Pſal. xl. 3. "And he hath put a new ſong in my mouth, even praiſe unto our God: many ſhall ſee it, and fear, and ſhall truſt in the Lord." As alſo the prophet Hoſea, ch. iii. 5. "Afterwards ſhall the children of Iſrael return, and ſeek the Lord their God, and David their king, and ſhall fear the Lord and his goodneſs in the latter days."

III. I PROCEED now to make ſome practical improvement of what hath been ſaid. And,

1. From what hath been ſaid, you may learn, that none can underſtand, embrace, or eſteem the mercy of God, but thoſe who are convinced of their ſin and miſery. Mercy can be of benefit only to the guilty; mercy can be beſtowed only on the guilty; and therefore all that can be ſaid in illuſtration of the divine mercy, all that can be ſaid in commendation of the divine mercy, will be eſteemed as idle tales by thoſe who do not know themſelves to be guilty. Hence the negligence and unconcern with which the goſpel is received. Very many of thoſe to whom it is addreſſed are inſenſible of their danger. The employments of the world ingroſs their time; the enjoyments of the world poſſeſs their affections: an eternal unchangeable ſtate is ſuppoſed at too great a diſtance to require their attention. I beſeech you, my brethren, to conſider, that the time of your trial is waſting apace. Let the commencement of another ſeaſon * put you in mind of its ſpeedy paſſage, and perſuade you to look forward to the day of death or judgement,

* Preached at the beginning of the year.

when all offers of mercy, and exhortations to repentance, shall cease, and when, though there may be forgiveness with God to all the proper objects of it in his extensive dominion, yet there shall be no forgiveness for you.

2. From what hath been said, you may observe, that the publication of divine mercy, that the illustration of the riches of divine grace in the gospel, hath not the least tendency to lessen our sense of the evil of sin, or the obligation we lie under to obedience: on the contrary, it serves greatly to improve both the one and the other. When we endeavour to bring consolation to the broken in heart; when we set before them the tender mercies of our God, and the infinite compassion of the Saviour; when we press them to hearken to the invitations of the gospel; when we encourage them to rest their salvation upon it, and to be at peace; this only serves to excite their indignation against sin, and persuade them to fly from it, to bring them to the obedience of children, and shed abroad the love of God in their hearts.

3. From what hath been said, you may see the difference between a real and scriptural discovery of forgiveness with God, and that careless security which arises from a presumptuous reliance on his general mercy. The one prevents conviction, the other produces it. The general and common plea of God's mercy, keeps the sinner at ease as he is; but a real and scriptural discovery of forgiveness with God, heals the broken in heart, and at the same time increases their sense of the evil of sin, and their abhorrence of every approach to it.

Presumption, and such views of God's mercy as are taken by the secure, arise entirely from the extenuation of sin. The language of their hearts is, 'Surely this is not so great a matter, but God's mercy will forgive it.' If you will either seriously examine yourselves, or observe, with some attention, the discourse of careless worldly persons, you will perceive this very clearly. They comfort themselves with the thoughts of their little comparative guilt, rather than of the certainty and greatness of divine mercy. 'I may, perhaps,' says one of them, 'have been guilty of such or such sins; but I am sure I never did so or so,' or perhaps as some others who immediately occur to their minds as greater sinners than themselves. I cannot help mentioning to you the saying of a prince of our own country, towards the close of life, who had been a remarkable libertine in his younger years: 'I cannot think,' says he *, 'that God will be so hard as to damn a man for taking a little pleasure out of the common road.'

In opposition to this, the true penitent sees more than ever his inexcuseable guilt as a sinner, but hopes for forgiveness from God, as the effect of his own infinite grace, and the accomplishment of his promise in the gospel. He gives the whole glory of it to him; and never thinks of diminishing the lustre of his transcendent mercy, by covering or extenuating the offence. Hence secure persons are easily satisfied, while true penitents make supplication with strong crying and tears. They are often reconsidering the promise, and frequently questioning the ground on which their dependence has

* K. Charles II. to Bishop Burnet.

been placed. Hence alſo ſecure perſons ſeek eaſe to themſelves from the remonſtrances of conſcience, by ſtifling conviction, and offering excuſes; but true penitents, by giving full force to the accuſation, and pleading the benefit of the remiſſion. To ſay all in a word, the one ſtruggles hard to be found innocent, the other to obtain mercy.

4. From what hath been ſaid, you may ſee of how much moment it is to the Chriſtian to keep clear views of the mercy of God, as well as of his own intereſt in it. The moment he loſes the comfortable ſenſe of peace with God, his chariot-wheels are troubled, and he drives heavily. It makes his duty burdenſome, and his trials inſupportable. And no wonder, ſince he is not ſo far left of God as to return to the ſecurity of ſinners; and at the ſame time the ſource of his inward conſolation is like "a ſpring ſhut up, and a fountain ſealed." For what end are the promiſes of God contained in ſcripture? why are they put into your hands? why are they repeated in your ears? Why, but for preſerving you in that peace which the world cannot give, and which, bleſſed be God, it cannot take away? Hear what your Saviour ſays, John, xvi. 33. "Theſe things have I ſpoken to you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye ſhall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

5. In the laſt place, you may ſee from what hath been ſaid, in what way you may moſt effectually, and moſt certainly, preſerve your peace with God, viz. by the frequent exerciſe of penitence and confeſſion. This will ſhew you the neceſſity of forgiveneſs from God. This will conſtrain you daily

to seek for forgiveness from God. Beware of seeking or preserving peace by the extenuation of sin, or by stifling conviction. This may well lead you to sloth and security for a season, which lays the foundation of the bitterest repentance of all; but will never give you the comfort of God's children. He that shutteth his eyes upon his own sins, shall never see the glory of divine mercy. Serious, voluntary, deliberate humiliation, is the true way of promoting both that steadiness in duty, and that peace with God, which ought to be the Christian's supreme desire. Whatever destroys self-sufficiency promotes the growth of true piety. The gospel is particularly directed to those that see their necessity. It brings comfort to the mourner, help to the miserable, and mercy to the guilty. It is a great mistake to think, that the contrition and penitence of the children of God is hurtful to their comfort, for it is the very foundation of it; according to that refreshing promise, with which I shall conclude, Is. lxi. 1. 2. 3. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek, he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted; to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified."

SERMON IV.

THE NATURE OF FAITH.

1 JOHN, iii. 23.

And this is his commandment, That we ſhould believe on the name of his Son Jeſus Chriſt.

ACTION SERMON.

WE propoſe, in a little, to draw near to God in the moſt ſolemn act of Chriſtian worſhip. With what humble ſolicitude ought we to inquire, whether we are truly entitled to this great privilege, or may hope for acceptance in this important duty. It is the moſt explicit, and the moſt public profeſſion we can make of faith in the Redeemer's blood; and therefore none can do it in a proper manner but thoſe who have indeed believed in the Redeemer's name.

Faith in Chriſt is the great foundation of our peace with God. It is the great principle of our ſanctification. It is the great diſtinction between the heirs of glory and the heirs of hell: "For he that believeth, and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved; but

he that believeth not, shall be damned." And therefore no subject can be of more importance in general, or more suited to our present employment, than what is presented to us in the words of the text, " This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ."

In the context, the apostle is speaking of the Christian's confidence or persuasion of his relation to God, ver. 20. 21. 22. " For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him; because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."

Having thus mentioned the commandments, he points out, in the words now read, the great commandments of the gospel, in their order: ' And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment." My purpose at this time is, to confine myself to the first of these; and open, in as comprehensive and practical a manner as I am able, what it is *to believe on the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;* and having done so, to make some practical improvement of the subject; particularly by pressing every hearer, in the most earnest manner, to obey this *commandment* of God.

I. In the *first* place, then, I am to explain what it is to believe on the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Many have been the controversies raised

and agitated on this subject, most of them unprofitable, and some of them very hurtful, as tending to disquiet and perplex the minds of serious persons, and sometimes even to furnish an objection to the enemies of the gospel. I shall, therefore, avoid every thing of this kind, as in general undesirable, and at this time highly unseasonable, and endeavour to lay it down in such a manner as I hope may be understood by the meanest real Christian, and may afford to every exercised soul inward consolation, and peace with God.

For this purpose, I hope it will be sufficient to observe, that faith may be considered in two views; its object, and its actings: 1st, *The object of faith*; that is to say, the truths to be believed: 2dly, *The actings of faith*; or what it is to believe these to the saving of the soul. As to the object of faith, it is thus expressed in our text: "This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." *Christ Jesus, the Saviour*, then, is the object of faith. This, in its full extent, includes every thing that is revealed in the holy scriptures, with respect to his person, character, and work. It may, indeed, be said to include the whole revealed will of God; because every part of this will has a more remote or immediate reference to him. Christ Jesus is "the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the ending," of the will of God as revealed for our salvation. But as every thing else was only introductory and preparatory to his atonement, or consequent upon it, I shall chiefly direct your attention to him as a Saviour from guilt and pollution. This

the name of Jesus immediately imports: Matth. i. 21. "And thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins." In this view, I think the object of faith may be summed up in the following particulars.

1. That we are, by nature, in a state of sin, alienated in heart from God, transgressors of his law, and liable to his wrath. If this were not the case, a *Saviour* would not be necessary; *salvation* would be a word without force, and even without meaning. It is accordingly found in experience, that till there be a conviction of this truth upon the conscience, the tidings of a Saviour are always treated with neglect or disdain. Nothing can be stronger than the language of scripture on this subject in many passages; particularly, Matth. xviii. 11. "For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost." Luke, v. 31. 32. "And Jesus answering, said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." I shall also read to you the account of our natural state, and the end of Christ's coming, given by the apostle Paul, Eph. ii. 1.—5. "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy,

for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in ſins, hath quickened us together with Chriſt, (by grace ye are ſaved." I forbear to mention the proof of this from the hiſtory of the world, from the marks of God's diſpleaſure againſt ſin in the courſe of providence, and from the teſtimony of conſcience, as I have illuſtrated them at conſiderable length in other diſcourſes. Let it ſuffice at preſent to ſay, that the firſt truth which is the object of faith, is the guilt and miſery of our nature.

2. The *next* part of the object of faith is, that there is no way of recovery from this ſtate but by Chriſt: Acts iv. 12. "Neither is there ſalvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we muſt be ſaved." If there were any other, it would not be the command of God that we ſhould believe in the name of his Son Jeſus Chriſt. After men are in ſome meaſure ſenſible that they are guilty, it is often difficult to convince them that they are helpleſs. There is ſomething ſo mortifying in this conſideration, and ſo humbling to our pride, that it is with great unwillingneſs we yield to it. Nay, after we have ſeemed to confeſs it, we are often ready to retract it. The ſinner has always a proneneſs to ſeek ſome reſource in himſelf. Hence the diſpoſition to extenuate his guilt; and if he cannot plead abſolute, to place ſome dependence on comparative innocence. Hence the diſpoſition to magnify human merit, as if, by the value of ſome good deeds, we could balance or cancel the guilt of our diſobedience. Hence the endleſs variety of human

inventions, of coſtly ſacrifices, and voluntary penance: Micah, vi. 6. 7. "Wherewith ſhall I come before the Lord, and bow myſelf before the high God? ſhall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleaſed with thouſands of rams, or with ten thouſands of rivers of oil? ſhall I give my firſt-born for my tranſgreſſion, the fruit of my body for the ſin of my ſoul?" The truth is, till the ſinner is ſtripped of every plea, and found to be without excuſe, he will ſtill refuſe to be indebted to the grace of his Redeemer. But hear ye the Spirit of God, Rev. iii. 17. 18. "Becauſe thou ſayeſt, I am rich, and increaſed with goods, and have need of nothing; and knoweſt not that thou art wretched, and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counſel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayeſt be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayeſt be clothed, and that the ſhame of thy nakedneſs do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-ſalve, that thou mayeſt ſee."

3. This leads me to the *third* part of the object of faith, viz. That the pardon of ſin, and peace with an offended God, is freely offered to the chief of ſinners through Chriſt. The two preceding truths are preparatory to this, and ſerve to point out its neceſſity and moment. This is the gracious meſſage which was brought into the world by the goſpel; and from which it derives its name, importing glad tidings. What we are particularly to attend to here is, (1.) That Chriſt Jeſus was ſubſtituted in the room of ſinners, and ſuffered, the juſt for the unjuſt, that he might bring us to God;

that the holineſs and juſtice of God required an expiation of ſin, which was made by this immaculate victim: If. liii. 5. 6. "But he was wounded for our tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for our iniquities: the chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him, and with his ſtripes we are healed. All we like ſheep have gone aſtray: we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Rom. iii. 25. "Whom God hath ſet forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteouſneſs for the remiſſion of ſins that are paſt, through the forbearance of God." (2.) Another thing alſo to be obſerved, is the conſtitution of the ſufferer's perſon. It was no leſs than the eternal and only-begotten Son of God. This is a circumſtance of the utmoſt moment, and on which the greateſt ſtreſs is manifeſtly laid in ſcripture. It is included in the words of the text: "This is his commandment, That we ſhould believe on the name of his Son Jeſus Chriſt." It is alſo conſtantly found in the early confeſſions of faith: John, i. 49. "Nathaniel anſwered and ſaid unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Iſrael." Matth. xvi. 16. "And Simon Peter anſwered and ſaid, Thou art Chriſt, the Son of the living God." Acts, viii. 37. "And Philip ſaid, If thou believeſt with all thine heart, thou mayeſt. And he anſwered and ſaid, I believe that Jeſus Chriſt is the Son of God." Unleſs this is attended to, we ſhall neither be ſufficiently ſenſible of the evil of ſin, which required ſuch an atonement, nor of the love of God which provided it, nor of the power of the Saviour to execute it;

nor can we have ſuch encouragement to put our truſt in it.

From theſe two circumſtances you may be directed to contemplate the leading and principal object of faith, viz. The only-begotten Son of God dying in our room, and purchaſing our pardon. Jeſus, the mediator of the new covenant, having finiſhed his work, invites weary and heavy-laden ſinners to come unto him; and aſſures them, that the higheſt demands of the law are anſwered, that their debt is fully paid, and nothing is now to be laid to their charge: Rom. viii. 33. 34. "Who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that juſtifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Chriſt that died, yea rather, that is riſen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who alſo maketh interceſſion for us." Rev. xxii. 17. "And the Spirit and the bride ſay, Come. And let him that heareth, ſay, Come. And let him that is athirſt come: and whoſoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

4. In the *laſt* place, The object of faith is the power of Chriſt to renew our natures, to deliver us from the bondage of corruption, and to bring us into the glorious liberty of God's children. We muſt never ſeparate the Redeemer's merit and his power. Conviction is imperfect unleſs we ſee our ſlavery, as well as miſery, and unfeignedly deſire deliverance from both. Neither do we properly apprehend the extent of Chriſt's undertaking, unleſs we view him exalted as a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance to Iſrael, and remiſſion of ſins. There are two things equally eſſential to the goſpel upon

this particular. (1.) The neceſſity of being ſanctified. Salvation in ſin is not promiſed; ſalvation or happineſs in ſin is not poſſible; and therefore all who hope for ſalvation through Chriſt, muſt be renewed in the ſpirit of their minds. Thenceforth they muſt not ſerve ſin: 2 Cor. v. 17. "If any man be in Chriſt, he is a new creature: old things are paſſed away, behold, all things are become new." If the wrath of God is revealed againſt all ungodlineſs of men, it muſt ſtill abide on the children of diſobedience. (2.) The other thing to be obſerved is, That the ſanctification of the believer is the purchaſe of Chriſt's blood, and the work of his Spirit. This is plain through the whole of the ſcriptures both of the Old Teſtament and the New: Ezek. xxxvi. 25. 26. 27. "Then will I ſprinkle clean water upon you, and ye ſhall be clean: from all your filthineſs, and from all your idols, will I cleanſe you. A new heart alſo will I give you, and a new ſpirit will I put within you; and I will take away the ſtony heart out of your fleſh, and I will give you an heart of fleſh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cauſe you to walk in my ſtatutes, and ye ſhall keep my judgments, and do them." John, xv. 4. 5. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itſelf, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the ſame bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." Nothing can be ſtronger than the language uſed on this ſubject: "His grace is ſufficient for us; his ſtrength is made perfect in weakneſs."

" By the grace of God," fays the apoſtle, " I am what I am." And again, " Not I, but the grace of God which was with me." Nay, he is ſaid " to work in us both to will and to do of his good pleaſure." All this ſhews, that there is no room for the ſinner to glory; but that the whole of his loſs by the fall, both his integrity and his happineſs, may be recovered, and can only be recovered, through Chriſt. This is the ſum of evangelical truth, this is the ſource of evangelical holineſs: Gal. ii. 16.—20. " Knowing that a man is not juſtified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jeſus Chriſt; even we have believed in Jeſus Chriſt, that we might be juſtified by the faith of Chriſt, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law ſhall no fleſh be juſtified. But if while we ſeek to be juſtified by Chriſt, we ourſelves alſo are found ſinners, is therefore Chriſt the miniſter of ſin? God forbid. For if I build again the things which I deſtroyed, I make myſelf a tranſgreſſor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Chriſt: nevertheleſs I live; yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the fleſh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himſelf for me."

I proceed now, in the *ſecond* place, to conſider the actings of faith, or what is implied in believing theſe truths to the ſaving of the ſoul. And I cannot help obſerving to you, that it is but in compliance with common cuſtom, or at leaſt with the preſent ſtate of things, that I ſay much upon this part of the ſubject. I am perſuaded it is of much mor

conſequence, and much more proper, to direct you to the object of faith in God's revealed will, to explain it in all its extent, and to preſs it with all the evidence that attends it, than to examine curiouſly into, and to diſtinguiſh nicely upon the nature of faith, as it is an act of the human mind. I do not find that the ſcripture ſays much upon the *act* of believing; but it is in a manner wholly employed in telling us *what* we ought to believe, both with regard to our apoſtacy and recovery. We do indeed read in ſcripture of believing with all the heart. We read alſo of a temporary faith in the ſtony-ground hearers; and of the ſtrength and weakneſs of faith. But all this ſeems, at leaſt chiefly, to relate to the firmneſs or uncertainty of our perſuaſion of, or aſſent to the truths which are addreſſed to us in the name of God. The ſimpleſt view of faith ſeems to be receiving "the record which God hath given us of his Son." Agreeably to this, the reverſe of faith in ſcripture is doubting: Matth. xiv. 31. "O thou of little faith, wherefore didſt thou doubt?" Matth. xxi. 21. "Jeſus anſwered and ſaid unto them, Verily I ſay unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye ſhall not only do this which is done to the fig-tree, but alſo if ye ſhall ſay unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou caſt into the ſea, it ſhall be done."

But, my brethren, ſince there have been queſtions upon this ſubject, and ſince it is certain from experience that there is a deceitfulneſs in the human heart, and a ſuppoſed faith, which yet is vain and fruitleſs, I ſhall obſerve, that the actings of faith may be reſolved into the three following particu-

lars, or that the faith of God's elect will discover itself by the three following effects.

1. A firm assent of the understanding to what is revealed of Christ in scripture; particularly as summed up in the preceding part of this discourse: That you believe the lost and helpless state of man by nature and practice: That Christ is able to save to the uttermost; and that he hath made effectual provision, both for expiating your guilt and purifying your hearts. Perhaps you will think this is easy, and be ready to say, that you have from your youth given, and that you do at this moment give, entire credit to the whole. But, my brethren, there is more here than you are aware of: there is a great difference between a common and traditionary belief which was never tried, and that inward and personal conviction which dwells in the heart, and therefore will govern the life. If any man believe, that all the posterity of Adam are in a state of guilt and misery, one would think it unavoidable that he must perceive his own danger as a part of the whole; and yet I am persuaded, it is usually a personal conviction of guilt and danger by the law upon the conscience that first opens the sinner's eyes upon the general truth; and then his own interest makes it bulk in his apprehension, and raises in him an earnest solicitude, both to examine into the cause of the disease, and to ask after the method of cure.

There is another way of considering the assent of the understanding to divine truth. The testimony of faith is opposed to the testimony of sense. Faith tells us, that our only happiness is in the fa-

vour of God, and that this can only be obtained through Chriſt; that eternity is coming on; and that there is no time to be loſt. Senſe, on the other hand, tells us, that the world is good, that its delights are pleaſant, and that our comfort is here; not forgetting to repreſent the ſervice of God as a burden and drudgery. In the mean time, the corrupt principle within aſſents to the deluſion, and aſſiſts in blinding the mind; adding, that whatever may be in religion, the danger may be warded off by a late repentance. It is not enough, then, to give a cold and general aſſent to the truths of religion when they are not contradicted, but to believe the teſtimony of faith, in oppoſition to the ſuggeſtions of ſenſe; or, in other words, "to walk by faith, and not by ſight." That this may be brought to the teſt, I obſerve,

2. That faith implies the conſent and approbation of the heart to every truth with regard to Chriſt's perſon and character, and ſalvation through his blood. To every believer, the plan of redemption by the Mediator of the new covenant, appears not only true, but wiſe, reaſonable, gracious, and neceſſary. This, my brethren, particularly diſtinguiſhes true faith, not only from unbelief and ſecurity, but from an empty and barren profeſſion. The careleſs deſpiſe the truth, the believer adores it; the half Chriſtian is aſhamed of it, the believer glories in it: "God forbid," ſays the apoſtle, Gal. vi. 14. "that I ſhould glory ſave in the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt." 1 Pet. ii. 7. "Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious: but unto them which be diſobedient, the ſtone which the

builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner."

I believe indeed it is usually a deep and heart-felt conviction of danger, which first persuades the sinner of the truth, and makes the trembling penitent a willing believer. But because there may be sometimes a belief of that truth which we do not esteem, nay, even a jealousy and suspicion of the truth of what we inwardly hate, I have added, that faith implies the consent and approbation of the heart. The whole doctrine of redemption appears to the believer most admirably calculated to promote the glory of God, and secure the salvation of sinners. Even what bears hardest upon man, taking away the foundation of self-righteousness and self-dependence, appears to him perfectly reasonable: he not only submits to it, but embraces and closes with it. He sees the law to be holy; he confesses the threatening to be just; and he is not only content, but thankful, that his present deliverance and future security depend, not on himself, but on the Redeemer. He is willing to be only and eternally indebted to the unmerited mercy and sovereign grace of God in Christ Jesus.

Thus you see the doctrine of salvation is represented in scripture under the form of a blessing to be received, as well as a truth to be believed: Isa. lv. 1. 2. 3. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth

not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your ſoul delight itſelf in fatneſs. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your ſoul ſhall live, and I will make an everlaſting covenant with you, even the ſure mercies of David." Matt. xi. 28. "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt." And indeed the inſpired writers always ſpeak of it in ſuch terms as ſhew themſelves not only ſatisfied of the truth, but deeply penetrated with a ſenſe of the greatneſs of the mercy: Eph. iii. 17. 18. 19. "That Chriſt may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all ſaints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Chriſt, which paſſeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulneſs of God."

3. In the *laſt* place, Faith implies ſuch a perſonal application of the truths of the goſpel as produceth repoſe of conſcience, dependence and reliance on the Saviour. This, my brethren, is the point firſt in view, and the termination of the whole; and I cannot help thinking, that it is ſo eſſential to faith, that faith and truſt are often put reciprocally for one another in the New Teſtament; as in Eph. i. 12. 13. "That we ſhould be to the praiſe of his glory, who firſt truſted in Chriſt. In whom ye alſo truſted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the goſpel of your ſalvation; in whom alſo, after that ye believed, ye were ſealed with that Holy Spirit of promiſe."

I do not mean to say, that divine faith is a belief that Christ died for me in particular. I know the strong objections which lie against that form of expression. The object of faith is, that Christ died for lost sinners, of the race of Adam. But as it can hardly be supposed, that any give their assent to this truth till they are convinced that they themselves are sinners; so, if they believe that there is no salvation in any other, and that he is able to save to the uttermost, it seems to follow of necessity, that they will rest and rely "upon him alone for salvation as he is offered in the gospel." This is certainly the view given us of the matter in the holy scripture: Rom. v. 1. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Heb. vi. 18. "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." Faith and despair are inconsistent. Faith and hope are inseparable. The glory of the Redeemer's person, the perfection of his atonement, and his ability to save, are all set before us in the gospel; and if we cannot rely upon him, if we cannot trust our salvation in his hands, it certainly arises from some doubt or disapprobation of these interesting truths. If you doubt of the truth, it is no wonder that you distrust the promise; but if you are truly and inwardly satisfied of Christ's power and mercy, you will close with him, as your Saviour, and say unto him, in the words of Thomas, when his doubts were removed, "My Lord, and my God."—Thus I have shortly given you a view

of the actings of faith: which may all be reduced to what I have endeavoured to illustrate; the assent of the understanding, the approbation of the heart, and these jointly producing repose of conscience and peace with God.

II. I PROCEED now, in the *last* place, to make some practical improvement of what hath been said on this important subject. And, in the

1*st* place, Hence learn the absolute necessity of self-denial, and how much it ought to prevail in the temper of a Christian. In explaining to you the object of faith, I have endeavoured to lay before you the nature of the gospel-message, and the substance of the truth as it is in Jesus, viz. the lost and helpless state of man by nature, forgiveness through the blood of Christ, and sanctification as the work of his Spirit. If this view is just, then religion must be begun, preserved, improved, and perfected, by union with Christ. If this view is just, then all self-righteousness and self-dependence is a denial of Christ. And indeed such is the life of a believer, if the conduct of the great apostle of the Gentiles may be taken for an example: Phil. iv. 13. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

2. Hence also learn the necessity of a new nature, in order to a new life. If the old nature is indeed in ruins, it will be lost labour to begin to build without a new foundation. And if the foundation is ill laid, however beautiful the superstructure, the fabric cannot be lasting. The not attending to this is visibly the cause of many miscarriages. Men

often reſolve upon ſome amendment of life, from prudence, conveniency, or even from imperfect convictions, and ſome apprehenſion of eternity itſelf. But though theſe reſolutions are formed with ſeeming ſincerity, inherent corruption ſoon becomes too ſtrong for ſuch feeble oppoſition. Remember therefore our Saviour's caution, "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt." If you deſire to live a life of holineſs or virtue, apply to God through Chriſt, for the pardon of your ſins, and peace with him. Intreat of him alſo, in the ſame prevailing name, that by his grace he would implant in you "a new heart, and a new ſpirit, that you may walk in his ways, and obſerve his judgements to do them."

3. Learn alſo how injurious they are to the doctrine of ſalvation by faith in Chriſt, who ſlander it as unfriendly to holineſs of life. So far from being unfavourable to holineſs, it makes the moſt effectual proviſion for it. Obedience to the whole law of God, is embraced by every believer as his choice, and promiſed as his duty; only he expects to derive ſtrength from his Redeemer to enable him to diſcharge it. I deſire to bear witneſs, and ſo will every faithful miniſter of the New Teſtament, that Chriſt came not to deſtroy the law, but to fulfil it. He hath not only left it in its full force upon the conſcience, but he hath added to its obligation. The awful ſanction of the law ſhall take place upon every impenitent ſinner. It is well repreſented by the flying roll, in the prophecies of Zechariah, chap. v. 3. 4. "Then ſaid he unto me, This is the

curſe that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that ſtealeth ſhall be cut off as on this ſide, according to it; and every one that ſweareth ſhall be cut off as on that ſide, according to it. I will bring it forth, ſaith the Lord of hoſts, and it ſhall enter into the houſe of the thief, and into the houſe of him that ſweareth falſely by my name: and it ſhall remain in the midſt of his houſe, and ſhall conſume it, with the timber thereof, and the ſtones thereof." See alſo the ſuperadded ſanction of the goſpel, Heb. x. 28. 29. "He that deſpiſed Moſes law died without mercy, under two or three witneſſes: of how much ſorer puniſhment, ſuppoſe ye, ſhall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was ſanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done deſpite unto the Spirit of grace?" Hear it, my brethren, hear it for your ſoul's ſake, any known ſin allowed in the heart or converſation, is as inconſiſtent with ſalvation under the covenant of grace as under the covenant of works; or rather, to ſpeak more properly, as many as continue in the practice of ſin are "condemned already," and remain under the power of that "miniſtration of death." To delight in the law of the Lord after the inward man, is the fruit of faith, the character of the new nature, and neceſſary to fit you for the divine preſence.

4. Suffer me to ſay a few words, for the reproof and conviction of thoſe who are living in contempt of the goſpel. Alas! how many are there who turn a deaf ear to the moſt earneſt and preſſing invitations addreſſed to them in the word of God, and

enforced by his providence! There are two sorts of despisers of the gospel: (1.) Those who are open and avowed enemies to the doctrine of the gospel, who desert it, despise it, or slander it. Too many there are of this character in the present age, to whom the cross of Christ is foolishness. O how deplorable is their folly! and how aggravated their guilt! If this is the divine commandment, That we should believe in the name of the Son of God, and there is truth in the divine word, "That there is no salvation in any other;" miserable indeed must be the state of those who are found thus fighting against God. Will it be a light thing to be found despisers of all that grace and love manifested in the gospel? How heavy is the threatening, in our Saviour's own words, against those who despise the "precious corner-stone," and "tried foundation, which is laid in Zion," Matt. xxi. 44. "And whosoever shall fall on this stone, shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." (2.) They are despisers of the gospel who, professing belief in the doctrine of Christ, continue to live in unrighteousness. He came to turn you from all your transgressions, as well as to deliver you from condemnation. His power is particularly illustrated in bringing sinners "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." The end of his coming is lost as to all those who continue in sin. If they are called by his name, they are a scandal to it; if they form any hopes from his sufferings, they will be disappointed; if they advance any claim to his mercy, it will be rejected; if they plead relation to him,

he will openly renounce them: Matth. vii. 21. 22, 23. "Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will ſay to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not propheſied in thy name? and in thy name have caſt out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? and then will I profeſs unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity."

5. In the *laſt* place, Suffer me, in the moſt earneſt manner, to beſeech every ſinner in this aſſembly, to believe in the name of the Son of God. I ſay, every ſinner, becauſe thoſe only who are ſenſible that they are ſinners will be obedient to the call. Are you not therefore ſenſible of your guilt and danger? Are your underſtandings ſo blinded, is natural conſcience itſelf ſo ſeared, that you do not ſee how much you ſtand in need of a Saviour? Remember, that if there be any truth in the whole compaſs of natural and revealed religion that cannot be ſpoken againſt, it is this, That God "is of purer eyes than he can behold iniquity;" and that, for this reaſon, "he will render unto every man according to his works." It is a truth engraven upon the conſcience, and ratified by the courſe of providence; the heathens diſcovered it through the thickeſt darkneſs; and the guilty confeſs it by their daily fears. What a harveſt of converts would I bring in, even in this aſſembly, if I could but lead to the Saviour every one that believes, in ſome meaſure, in a judgement to come! What an aſtoniſhing diſorder is brought into our nature by ſin! What a marvel-

lous deluſion is upon the mind, and what inconſiſtency is there in the conduct of ſinners! It is hard to ſay which of the two is moſt amazing; their backwardneſs to receive the truth, or their unwillingneſs to obey it; their inattention to evidence, on the one hand, or their forgetfulneſs of what they do believe, on the other. Is there any perſon within theſe walls who doubts that he is to die; or who does not believe that he muſt be judged after death? Are you then ready for the trial? Have you ſerved your Maker? Have you loved him above all? Have you lived to his glory? Have you ſought and placed your happineſs in his favour? Or are you ſenſible that iniquities have prevailed againſt you? Have they now taken hold upon you, ſo that you cannot lift your eyes? Behold, I preach peace to you through Jeſus Chriſt. Believe in his name and merits for your pardon; rely on his grace and Spirit for your reformation; and return to God through him, as your unchangeable portion. This is the tenor of the goſpel: Luke, xxiv. 46. 47. "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Chriſt to ſuffer, and to riſe from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remiſſion of ſins ſhould be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jeruſalem."

SERMON V.

CHRIST'S DEATH A PROPER ATONEMENT FOR SIN.

1 JOHN, ii. 2.

And he is the propitiation for our ſins: and not for ours only, but alſo for the ſins of the whole world.

ACTION SERMON.

MY brethren, To as many as have any belief of eternity, it muſt be a matter of unſpeakable moment to know, how they may have confidence towards God. This inquiry becomes, if poſſible, ſtill more ſerious, when we conſider man as in a lapſed and corrupt ſtate by nature, as guilty, and obnoxious to his Maker's righteous judgement; then it becomes neceſſary not only to preſerve the favour, not only to avoid the diſpleaſure, but to ſeek for ſome ſhelter or covering from the wrath of God.

This is the account given us of our condition in ſcripture; which, as it is a truth of the utmoſt importance, lying at the foundation of all religion,

I have often endeavoured both to explain and enforce. And happy, happy they who have heard with application; happy they whose eyes have been opened on their danger as sinners; who have seen and felt the evil of sin, as a departure from and rebellion against a most holy, righteous, and gracious God. Happy they who, rejecting the vain reasonings of the carnal mind, and the cobweb-defences of the short-sighted creature, have been laid prostrate, as guilty and helpless, before the sovereign and almighty Creator. All mankind, in the several ages of the world, have in general discovered such a jealousy of their condition, and have so far felt the reproof and condemnation of natural conscience, that their attempts and inventions have been innumerable to appease the offended Deity.

But blessed be the name of God, we are not left to any uncertainty as to this important question. We may chearfully apply our minds to it, and receive unspeakable consolation, "through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us." The way to life and peace is fully explained in the glorious gospel of the Son of God. We are indeed, by nature, guilty sinners, enemies to God in our minds and by wicked works; but there is a gracious provision made for our recovery in the mediation of Christ. This is the strong-hold and refuge of the sinner; it is the foundation-stone and confidence of the believer. In the 8th and 9th verses of the preceding chapter, the apostle John says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful

and juſt to forgive us our ſins, and to cleanſe us from all unrighteouſneſs." And in the verſe preceding the text, "My little children, theſe things write I unto you, that ye ſin not. And if any man ſin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous." He then teaches the Chriſtian to live by faith in the Saviour's blood: "And he is the propitiation for our ſins;" and that he might further illuſtrate the extent and efficacy of the great atonement, he adds, "and not for ours only, but alſo for the ſins of the whole world." In further diſcourſing on this ſubject, I propoſe, through the aſſiſtance of divine grace,

I. To conſider Chriſt as the propitiation for ſin, or what is implied in his being ſo called.

II. To conſider the extent of this propitiation, or its being for the ſins of the whole world. And,

III. To make ſome practical improvement of the ſubject.

I. FIRST, then, Let us conſider Chriſt as the propitiation for our ſin, or what is implied in his being ſo called. We find our Saviour deſigned as a propitiation in ſeveral other paſſages of ſcripture; as in this epiſtle, chap. iv. 10. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and ſent his Son to be the propitiation for our ſins;" and Rom. iii. 25. "Whom God hath ſet forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." It is the opinion of many learned men, that Chriſt is called "a propitiation," or "the propitiation," in alluſion to the mercy-ſeat above the ark, which was ſet up at firſt in the tabernacle, and afterwards in the

temple in the moſt holy place. To confirm this, it is obſerved, that the original word here uſed is the ſame which the Greek tranſlators of the Old Teſtament always uſe to denote the mercy-ſeat, and which the apoſtle to the Hebrews uſes when ſpeaking of the ſame ſubject, Heb. ix. 5. "And over it the cherubims of glory ſhadowing the mercy-ſeat: of which we cannot now ſpeak particularly." But I apprehend there is ſome inverſion of the order of things in this remark; for Chriſt is not called a propitiation in alluſion to the mercy-ſeat, which, independent of him, could ill bear that denomination; but the mercy-ſeat hath this title given to it, becauſe it was an eminent type of Chriſt. It beautifully, indeed, repreſented the benefit which we derive from him as our propitiation. For as God, by the Shechinah, or ſymbol of his preſence, dwelt of old upon the mercy-ſeat, between the cherubims, and was from that place propitious to his people; ſo now God dwells in Chriſt, and by him reconciles ſinners to himſelf: 2 Cor. v. 19. "To wit, that God was in Chriſt, reconciling the world unto himſelf, not imputing their treſpaſſes unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." In that ancient diſpenſation, every worſhipper was to look toward the mercy-ſeat; and it was from thence that God accepted them, and gave intimations of their acceptance: ſo it is through Chriſt, or in his name, that we have now acceſs to God; and it is in him that he ſheweth us favour, and maketh us accepted: Eph. i. 6. "To the praiſe of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved." It was

from the mercy-ſeat that God ſpake to his people by the intervention of the high-prieſt, and by Urim and Thummim; ſo it is by his Son that God now ſpeaks to us, and ſhews us the way of ſalvation: Matth. xvii. 5. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleaſed; hear ye him."

But the true and proper meaning of Chriſt's being a propitiation, is to be taken from the ſacrifices in general, and particularly points at his undertaking the office of mediator and peace-maker between God and man, and in that capacity ſuffering the wrath of God in the room of ſinners. By this he appeaſeth him, rendereth him propitious or gracious to us, and purchaſeth our pardon: Rom. iii. 25. "Whom God hath ſet forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood." Remember how intimately it is connected with *redemption*, another expreſſion which runs through the whole of the New Teſtament, and is conſidered as equivalent to the forgiveneſs of ſins: Eph. i. 7. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveneſs of ſins, according to the riches of his grace." Now, redemption certainly ſignifies purchaſing or buying with a price.

The ſacrifices under the Moſaic œconomy did all of them imply a ſubſtitution in room of ſomething that had been forfeited, or was due. It is obſerved by one eminent for knowledge of Jewiſh antiquities, that beſides what was done when any particular perſon preſented a ſin-offering, at the continual burnt-offering there were certain men appointed to repreſent the whole congregation of Iſrael. Their office was, to lay their hands upon the head of the

lamb, and thus as it were transfer the guilt from the people to the victim. On this account they were called *stationary men*, becauſe they attended continually for this end. And as the very purpoſes of the ſacrifices under the law was, to typify the ſacrifice of Chriſt, they are a ſtanding evidence of the early and original reference to him, as the ground of divine mercy.

Nothing is more undeniably true, than that the offering of ſacrifices was both early and univerſal in every nation under heaven; and it is no leſs certain, that thoſe who uſed them did conſider them as expiatory, or propitiatory, to render the offended Deity placable, and obtain his mercy. This was at once a confeſſion of guilt, and a declaration, that they apprehended the neceſſity and propriety of an atonement. Neither is it poſſible to account for the univerſal prevalence of ſacrifices in any tolerable manner, but by ſuppoſing, that they were the remains of what had been taught in the ages immediately after the fall, by divine appointment.

I apprehend it is alſo undeniably evident, that this is the light in which the ſacrifice of Chriſt is repreſented in the holy ſcriptures. How many paſſages might be adduced to this purpoſe? In ancient prophecy, this part of his work is ſet forth in the following manner: If. liii. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our ſorrows: yet we did eſteem him ſtricken, ſmitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for our iniquities: the chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him, and with his ſtripes we are healed. All we like ſheep have

gone aſtray: we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppreſſed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the ſlaughter, and as a ſheep before her ſhearers is dumb, ſo he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from priſon and from judgement: and who ſhall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the tranſgreſſion of my people was he ſtricken." Dan. ix. 24. "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finiſh the tranſgreſſion, and to make an end of ſins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlaſting righteouſneſs, and to ſeal up the viſion and prophecy, and to anoint the moſt Holy."

In the New Teſtament, he tells us, he was to lay down his life for his people: John, x. 11. "I am the good ſhepherd: the good ſhepherd giveth his life for the ſheep." The ſame thing he plainly ſays in the inſtitution of the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper, Matth. xxvi. 26. 27. 28. "And as they were eating, Jeſus took bread, and bleſſed it, and brake it, and gave it to the diſciples, and ſaid, Take eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, ſaying, Drink ye all of it: for this is my blood of the new teſtament, which is ſhed for many for the remiſſion of ſins." That his body broken and blood ſhed for his people, was to be underſtood of his being made a ſin-offering, is plainly teſtified in the apoſtolic writings: 2 Cor. v. 21. "For he hath made him to be ſin for us, who knew no ſin; that

we might be made the righteouſneſs of God in him." Gal. iii. 13. "Chriſt hath redeemed us from the curſe of the law, being made a curſe for us: for it is written, Curſed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Heb. ix. 26. 27. 28. "But now once in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away ſin by the ſacrifice of himſelf. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: ſo Chriſt was once offered to bear the ſins of many; and unto them that look for him, ſhall he appear the ſecond time, without ſin, unto ſalvation." See alſo the aſſertion of the apoſtle Peter, 1 Pet. iii. 18. "Chriſt alſo hath once ſuffered for ſins, the juſt for the unjuſt, (that he might bring us to God), being put to death in the fleſh, but quickened by the Spirit." It is evidently alſo on this account that he is called the Lamb of God, and we are called to attend to him in that capacity: John, i. 29. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the ſin of the world."

It is lamentable to think, that there ſhould be any who call themſelves Chriſtians, and yet refuſe to acknowledge this truth, which is woven, if I may ſo ſpeak, through the whole contexture, both of the law and goſpel. It brings to my mind the ſtory of an ancient artiſt, who, being employed to build a magnificent and elegant temple, had the ingenuity to inſcribe upon it his own name, and ſo to incorporate it both with the ornaments and body of the ſtructure, that it was impoſſible afterwards to efface the name, without at the ſame time deſtroying the fabric. In the ſame manner, Chriſt dying for ſin is engraven in ſuch characters through the

whole revealed will of God, that it is impoſſible to take it away without overturning the whole ſyſtem. For this end Chriſt came into the world; for this end he bore the name of *Jeſus*, or the *Saviour*; and for this end he became the High-prieſt of our profeſſion, that he might, "by one offering, for ever perfect them that are ſanctified."

This, then, is the ſcripture-view of Chriſt as our propitiation, that our guilt is taken away, and we are reconciled to God through the ſacrifice which he hath offered without ſpot or blemiſh. And notwithſtanding all that has been thrown out againſt it by the pride of ſelf-righteouſneſs, there is nothing that can be juſtly oppoſed to it on the part of unprejudiced reaſon. God is merciful, but he is alſo juſt. And as there is nothing more inſeparable from the idea of ſin, and an accuſing conſcience, than merited puniſhment; ſo there is nothing more eſſential to the idea of juſtice in God, than a diſpoſition to inflict it. This the ſcripture every where declares; and the conſcience of the guilty, who dreads his Maker's preſence, ratifies the truth.

Now, if God ſhews mercy to the ſinner, is it ſo abhorrent from reaſon, that this ſhould be by a mediator, if one can be found fit to ſtep in between the parties, and "lay his hand upon them both?" Is not this neceſſary to manifeſt the righteouſneſs and ſeverity of the law, as well as the tenderneſs and compaſſion of the Judge? Is not this preciſely the reaſon aſſigned for it in ſcripture? Rom. iii. 25. "To declare his righteouſneſs for the remiſſion of ſins that are paſt, through the forbearance of God." It is trifling to ſay, that there is nothing of the paſ-

ſion of anger in God that ſhould need to be appeaſed. Such expreſſions are only figurative, but they convey their meaning very clearly. It is not anger or revenge, as they appear in our diſordered frame, that accepts of an atonement. Theſe furious paſſions fly directly at the offending perſon, and reject all interceſſion. But juſtice, in calm and regular government, requires ſatisfaction, that the malignity and demerit of the offence may be preſerved while mercy is extended to the criminal. We ought to conſider, that one great and general end of the diſpenſations of providence is, to illuſtrate the glory of the true God in all his real perfections. This is beſt done by a purchaſed pardon, by a wiſe and awful mixture of impartial juſtice with unmerited mercy. How can you hear the word *mercy* ſo often without perceiving this? It is not mercy at all, unleſs it be beſtowed on thoſe who have deſerved to ſuffer; and therefore why may not a voluntary ſurety be admitted to ſuffer in their place? The truth is, ſuch are the impreſſions that are uſually made on the awakened conſcience, of the infinite holineſs and purity, and the tremendous majeſty of God, that nothing leſs will ſatisfy it than a ſufficient atonement, or a clear view how he may be "juſt, and yet the juſtifier of him that believeth on Jeſus."

But, my brethren, it is one thing to know, to profeſs, or even to ſupport the truth; and another, but of unſpeakably more moment, to feel, and to apply it. It is one thing to have a rational conviction, from critical inquiry, that this is taught in the holy ſcriptures; and another, to cleave to it with eſteem and affection, as *the goſpel of our ſal-*

vation, as the great foundation of our hope and peace. Therefore, in what remains of this branch of the ſubject, I would conſider myſelf as ſpeaking, not to the wrangling diſputer, but to the convinced ſinner; not to the ſelf-righteous boaſter, but to the broken in ſpirit. The chief circumſtances in the propitiation which Chriſt hath made, to be taken notice of in this view, are theſe two: 1. Its abſolute neceſſity. 2. Its perfect ſufficiency.

1. Conſider the *abſolute neceſſity* of this atonement. There is no other way by which the ſinner can be reſtored to the favour of God. Nothing can be clearer from the holy ſcriptures. It is indeed the tacit inference that may be drawn from the whole. Why is this love and mercy of God celebrated in ſuch exalted ſtrains by the inſpired writers, and felt with ſo much gratitude by the redeemed, but that they were under condemnation, and muſt have periſhed, but for the help of this Saviour? Rom. viii. 1. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Chriſt Jeſus, who walk not after the fleſh, but after the Spirit." And the ſame chapter, ver. 33. "Who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that juſtifieth." John iii. 16. "God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life." As "without ſhedding of blood there is no remiſſion," ſo we have the ſame infallible teſtimony, Heb. x. 4. that "it is not poſſible that the blood of bulls and of goats ſhould take away ſins." Nay, that the thing might be put beyond all poſſibility of doubt, ſee the declara-

tion of Peter and John, Acts, iv. 12. "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." And what other sense can be put upon these words of our Saviour himself? John, xiv. 6. "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." In vain, then, do we found our hopes upon any thing else: The holiness of the divine nature, the purity of the divine law, and the greatness of divine power, conspire in blasting every hope of the sinner but what is centered in Christ.

2. Consider the *perfect sufficiency* of this atonement. It is sufficient to answer all the demands of law and justice. It is sufficient to vindicate the honour of the divine government, and to illustrate the holiness and justice of God in the forgiveness of sin. It is sufficient to purchase a full and complete remission to the greatest sinner. Whoever reflects upon the infinite wisdom of God, must be sensible that it is not without reason that so much is said on this subject in scripture; that so much pains is taken to set forth the glory and greatness of the Saviour of sinners. The greatness of his person, and dignity of his character, are set before us in the most striking light. He is "the eternal and only-begotten Son of God; the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." And Phil. ii. 6. "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Is. ix. 6. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his

ſhoulder: and his name ſhall be called, Wonderful, Counſellor, The mighty God, the everlaſting Father, The Prince of peace."

It is not eaſy, indeed, to enumerate the magnificent titles with which he is adorned in ſcripture: "The Alpha and Omega,—The Firſt and the Laſt,—The Prince of the kings of the earth,—The King of kings, and Lord of lords,—The King of glory,—and The King of ſaints." What mighty works are aſcribed to him in creation and providence! We are told, "He ſhall reign till all enemies are brought under his feet." The propriety of his ſacrifice as the Son of Man, and the purity of his ſacrifice as the Holy One of God, are taken notice of in ſcripture: Heb. ii. 17. "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren; that he might be a merciful and faithful high-prieſt, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the ſins of the people." Heb. ix. 13. 15. "For if the blood of bulls, and of goats, and the aſhes of an heifer ſprinkling the unclean, ſanctifieth to the purifying of the fleſh; how much more ſhall the blood of Chriſt, who through the eternal Spirit offered himſelf without ſpot to God, purge your conſcience from dead works to ſerve the living God?" To this you may add the continued fulneſs that dwells in him: John, i. 16. "And of his fulneſs have all we received, and grace for grace." Col. i. 19. "For it pleaſed the Father, that in him ſhould all fulneſs dwell." What is this, my brethren, but to encourage and embolden ſinners to put their truſt in him, and to carry home with power this truth,

which I shall give you in the words of the Holy Ghost? Heb. vii. 25. "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

II. I PROCEED now to the *second* thing proposed, which was, to consider the extent of this propitiation, founded on the last clause of the text: "And not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." In general, when we remember that this epistle was written chiefly to the converts of the circumcision, it may convince us, that in all probability this expression was intended against the great and national prejudice of the Jews, of which we see very frequent notice taken in the New Testament. As they had the oracles of God committed to them, as for the wise purposes of his providence he had separated them from other nations, and the Messiah was to descend from them according to the flesh, they apprehended that all the blessings of his reign were to be confined to themselves: therefore they are often given to understand, that the purpose of mercy was far more extensive, and that Christ came with a view to fulfil that promise made to the father of the faithful, Gen. xxii. 18. "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." The expression in the text, then, undoubtedly implies, that redemption through the blood of Christ was to be preached to sinners of the Gentiles; that as he had been the Saviour of all ages, by the efficacy of that sacrifice which he was

to offer in the fulneſs of time, ſo the virtue of it was not to be confined to the houſe of Iſrael, but to belong to ſinners of every nation under heaven.

I am ſenſible, my brethren, that very great controverſies have been raiſed, in another view, as to the extent of Chriſt's death, and the import of this and other ſuch general expreſſions in the holy ſcriptures. In this, as in moſt other debates, matters have been carried a far greater length than the intereſt of truth and piety requires; and, as is alſo uſual, they have ariſen from an improper and unſkilful mixture of what belongs to the ſecret counſels of the Moſt High with his revealed will, which is the invariable rule of our duty. Without entering, therefore, into theſe debates, which are unſuitable to our preſent employment, or rather giving my judgement, that they are for the moſt part unneceſſary, unprofitable, or hurtful, I ſhall lay down three propoſitions on this ſubject, which I think can hardly be called in queſtion, and which are a ſufficient foundation for our faith and practice.

1. The obedience and death of Chriſt is of value ſufficient to expiate the guilt of all the ſins of every individual that ever lived or ever ſhall live on earth. This cannot be denied, ſince the ſubjects to be redeemed are finite, the price paid for their redemption is infinite. He ſuffered in the human nature, but that nature intimately and perſonally united to the divine; ſo that Chriſt the mediator, the gift of God for the redemption of ſinners, is often called his own and his eternal Son;

Rom. viii. 32. "He that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all things?" Such was the union of the divine and human nature in Chriſt, that the blood which was the purchaſe of our redemption is expreſsly called the blood of God, Acts, xx. 28. "To feed the church of God, which he hath purchaſed with his own blood." This is the great myſtery of godlineſs, God manifeſted in the fleſh, in which all our thoughts are loſt and ſwallowed up.

2. Notwithſtanding this, every individual of the human race is not in fact partaker of the bleſſings of his purchaſe; but many die in their ſins, and periſh for ever. This will as little admit of any doubt. Multitudes have died, who never heard of the name of Chriſt, or ſalvation through him; many have lived and died blaſpheming his perſon, and deſpiſing his undertaking; many have died in unbelief and impenitence, ſerving divers luſts and paſſions; and if the ſcripture is true, he will at laſt render unto them according to their works. So that if we admit, that the works of God are known to him from the beginning of the world, it can never be true, that, in his eternal counſels, Chriſt died to ſave thoſe who, after all that he hath done, ſhall be miſerable for ever. "He is a rock, his work is perfect." His deſign never could be fruſtrated; but, as the apoſtle Paul expreſſes it, Rom. xi. 7. "The election hath obtained it, and the reſt were blinded." But,

3. There is in the death of Chriſt a ſufficient foundation laid for preaching the goſpel indefinite-

ly to all without exception. It is the command of God that this ſhould be done: Mark, xvi. 15. "And he ſaid unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the goſpel to every creature." The effect of this is, that the miſery of the unbelieving and impenitent ſhall lie entirely at their own door; and they ſhall not only die in their ſins, but ſhall ſuffer to eternity for this moſt heinous of all ſins, deſpiſing the remedy, and refuſing to hear the Son of God: Heb. x. 26. 27. "For if we ſin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more ſacrifice for ſins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgement, and fiery indignation, which ſhall devour the adverſaries." Let us neither refuſe our aſſent to any part of the revealed will of God, nor fooliſhly imagine an oppoſition between one part of it and another. All the obſcurity ariſes from, and may be reſolved into, the weakneſs of our underſtandings; but let God be true, and every man a liar. That there is a ſenſe in which Chriſt died for all men, and even for thoſe who periſh, is plain from the very words of ſcripture: 1 Tim. iv. 10. "For therefore we both labour and ſuffer reproach, becauſe we truſt in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, eſpecially of thoſe that believe." 1 Cor. viii. 11. "And through thy knowledge ſhall the weak brother periſh, for whom Chriſt died?" Thus it appears, that both in a national and perſonal view, Chriſt is "the propitiation for our ſins; and not for ours only, but alſo for the ſins of the whole world."

III. I PROCEED now, in the *laſt* place, to make ſome practical improvement of the ſubject for your inſtruction and direction. And,

1. From what hath been ſaid, let us be induced to give praiſe to God for his mercy to loſt ſinners, revealed in the goſpel. Let us particularly give him praiſe for Chriſt Jeſus, his unſpeakable gift: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his Son to be the propitiation for us."

While we remember, with abaſement of ſoul, the holineſs and juſtice of God, which required ſatisfaction for ſin, let us alſo remember his infinite compaſſion, who was pleaſed himſelf to provide "a lamb for the burnt-offering." Let us at the ſame time give praiſe to the tender-hearted Saviour, who gave his life as an offering "of a ſweet-ſmelling ſavour" to God. Redeeming grace ſhall be the theme of eternal gratitude and praiſe in heaven." After all our trials and dangers are over, we ſhall then, with unſpeakable delight, aſcribe the honour of our victory to him, ſaying, Rev. v. 12. "Worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain, to receive power, and riches, and wiſdom, and ſtrength, and honour, and glory, and bleſſing." Why ſhould we not alſo attempt to give him praiſe in his church on earth? for he, having finiſhed his own work, and entered into his glory, hath given us an aſſured proſpect, that we alſo ſhall overcome in his ſtrength; that he will come again, and "receive us to himſelf; that where he is, there we may be alſo."

2. You may see from what hath been said, that such as are yet unrelated to this Saviour are in a state of sin, and liable to divine wrath. Hear and receive this truth, however unwelcome to the secure, however distasteful to the carnal mind. If it were not so, this propitiation which God hath set forth would have been altogether unnecessary. Let us beg of him who hath ascended up on high, to send down, according to his promise, his Spirit to convince the world of sin. How many affecting and striking proofs have we of this, both in our character and state! and yet how difficult to make us sensible of it! What is to be seen in the world at present, or what do we read in the history of past ages, but one melancholy scene of disorder, misery, and bloodshed, succeeding another! Is not this the effect of human guilt? And do we not, by mutual injuries, at once demonstrate our own corruption, and execute the just judgement of God upon one another? May not every person discover the latent source of these flagrant crimes, in the pollution of his own heart, his aversion to what is good, and his proneness and inclination to what is evil? And yet, alas! how difficult a matter is it to make the heart humble itself, and plead guilty before God; to make us sensible, that we are transgressors from the womb, and inexcuseable in this transgression; that the threatening of the law is most just, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them;" and that it is of the infinite mercy of God, that the execution is suspended, or any hope given us of being able to avert it!

Yet this, my brethren, I will repeat it, and I beſeech you to attend to it, is certainly the caſe, by nature, with every perſon in this aſſembly. Every one who now hears me is in a ſtate of condemnation, and liable to everlaſting miſery, excepting that happy number who have "fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope ſet before them." All inſenſible perſons, living in a careleſs ſecure forgetfulneſs of God; all who indulge themſelves habitually in the luſts of the fleſh; drunkards, ſwearers, profane and laſcivious jeſters, liars, unjuſt perſons, lovers of the preſent world, are aliens from the commonwealth of Iſrael, and ſtrangers to the covenant of promiſe. O that it were poſſible for me to awaken you to a ſenſe of your danger, while there is yet a poſſibility of eſcaping! O the importance to you of the unknown time from this day of your merciful viſitation to the day of your death! What would thoſe who are now reſerved in chains to the judgement of the great day give for the precious opportunity you are now deſpiſing! In a little time I know that you yourſelves will repent; O that it may not be when it is too late to reform! But all words muſt ſink under ſuch a ſubject. No picture that I could draw of the deſpairing horror of a ſinner on his deathbed, or the blaſpheming rage of thoſe who are tormented in hell-fire, could poſſibly give any of you a juſt apprehenſion of what it is to fall into the hands of the living God, unleſs it pleaſe himſelf to wound the conſcience with the arrows of conviction, that he may afterwards pour in the healing balm of peace and conſolation. And

O that it might ſtand with the will of God, that none here preſent ſhould eſcape!

3. Learn from what has been ſaid, that there is no ſacrifice for ſin, but the one offering of our Redeemer on the croſs; no hope of mercy for any child of Adam, but through his blood. The typical ſacrifices under the Old Teſtament were but ſhadows, the ſubſtance is Chriſt. In vain will any go about to eſtabliſh their own righteouſneſs, and refuſe to ſubmit to the righteouſneſs of God. Think not, my brethren, by attempts of reformation, by faulty defective duties, to be able to cancel any part of that guilt to which you are adding every day. How great is the folly and preſumption of ſelf-righteouſneſs! What a profane contempt of the riches of divine grace! Hath God ſeen it neceſſary to ſet forth Chriſt as a propitiation through faith in his blood? and will you ſay, that it is unneceſſary, and ſpurn the offered mercy? How much ignorance is in ſelf-righteouſneſs! What imperfect views muſt they have of the law of God, and how little knowledge of themſelves, and their own hearts, who admire or truſt in human virtue! Above all, what is the foundation and corner-ſtone of ſelf-righteouſneſs? It is pride, that ſin of all others moſt odious and abominable in the ſight of God. Is it not a matter of daily experience, that thoſe perſons who are evidently moſt looſe and careleſs in their own practice, and who, one would think, ſhould have leaſt of that kind to rely upon, are moſt prone to a ſelf-righteous plan, and moſt ready to deſpiſe the doctrine of juſtification through the imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt. Are you

ſometimes ſurpriſed at this, Chriſtians? The thing is eaſily explained. They know little either of the law of God or their own hearts. They ſeldom ſtudy the one, or reflect upon the other. If they did, they would ſoon be aſhamed of ſuch a pretence. Thoſe who apply themſelves with the greateſt diligence to the ſtudy of holineſs in heart and life, do always moſt ſenſibly feel, and moſt willingly confeſs, that all their righteouſneſſes are as filthy rags before God.

4. In Chriſt Jeſus, and the blood of the everlaſting covenant, there is abundant proviſion made for the pardon of all our ſins, and peace with an offended God. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the ſin of the world!" Behold the Lamb which God himſelf hath ordained, and ſet apart for this important work, and which he will certainly accept! "Deliver them," ſaith he, "from going down to the pit: I have found a ranſom." Behold the immaculate and ſpotleſs victim in the purity of his human, and the glory of his divine nature! There is no ſin ſo atrocious but his blood is ſufficient to waſh away the guilt. Is there any ſinner in this aſſembly burdened with a ſenſe of guilt, arreſted by an accuſing conſcience, terrified by the thunders of the law, ready to cry out, "Who can ſtand before this holy Lord God! My fleſh trembleth becauſe of thee: I am afraid of thy judgements?" Let ſuch an one know, that help is laid on him that is "mighty to ſave." Let your guilt be what it will, who can ſo far derogate from the Redeemer's glory, as to ſuſpect that his blood cannot purge it away? Give no heed to unbeliev-

ing thoughts, or discouraging suggestions; but be "strong in faith, giving glory to God;" and attend to the Saviour's own words: "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

5. In the *last* place, Let all the children of God, whose hope hath still been in the divine mercy through a crucified Saviour, embrace the opportunity now given them of professing, exercising, and strengthening their faith in the great atonement. Plead your relation to God through Christ, and encourage yourselves in his all-sufficiency and merit. Look upon his sufferings for humbling you under a sense of the evil of sin, which made such an expiation necessary. Nothing serves more to abase and level human pride, than to see our nature on the cross, though personally united to the divine. Look upon him in his agony, for mortifying and crucifying sin in you. There is a purifying virtue, and sanctifying efficacy, in the blood of Christ. It not only speaks peace to the wounded conscience, but purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. I am not against the introduction of every argument from scripture or reason against sin, or in support of duty; but let them never supplant the great, the leading, the constraining argument, which is drawn from the cross of Christ. Believe it, my brethren, nothing so much reconciles the heart to duty, nothing so kindles a holy indignation against sin, as a believing view of the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This gives the spirit of adoption, a child-like fear, and a child-like love. This fills the Christian with comfort, this inspires the Christian with zeal. To

ſeek our comfort in a ſeparate way, or in the firſt inſtance from our duties, is to make that comfort feeble and variable as the duties are defective; but to enliven our duties by the comforts of the goſpel, is to follow the order of the covenant of grace, by which we at once promote the glory of God, and moſt effectually ſecure our own comfort and peace. This is the ſpirit breathed by the apoſtle Paul, with whoſe words, Gal. ii. 19. 20. I ſhall conclude: "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Chriſt: nevertheleſs I live; yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the fleſh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himſelf for me."

SERMON VI.

THE LOVE OE CHRIST IN REDEMPTION.

REV. i. 5.

Unto him that loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood.

ACTION SERMON.

THE bare repetition of theſe words is ſufficient to convince every hearer how well they are ſuited to the deſign of our preſent meeting. Redeeming love is certainly the moſt deliglitful of all themes to every real Chriſtian. It is the immediate and direct object of our contemplation in the Lord's ſupper. This ordinance was inſtituted to keep up the remembrance of the ſufferings and death of Chriſt, which was the great and finiſhing proof of his love. How then can you attend on it in a more becoming and beautiful, a more deſirable, or a more happy and uſeful frame of ſpirit, than when your hearts are filled with a ſenſe of the love of Chriſt, and you find yourſelves diſpoſed to join,

with a mixture of joy and wonder, in the doxology of the apoſtle John, in the text, *Unto him that loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood!*

The author of this book is ſometimes ſtyled "the diſciple whom Jeſus loved." Since, therefore, it pleaſed his maſter to diſtinguiſh him by the tenderneſs of particular friendſhip, it is no wonder that we find ſo much of the delightful affection of love in his writings. In the beginning of this chapter, he gives an account of the general ſubject and deſign of the book of Revelation, the manner in which the diſcoveries contained in it were made to him, and his fidelity in teſtifying them to others. Then follows the apoſtolic ſalutation to the ſeven churches in Aſia, which is a ſolemn benediction, in name of all the perſons of the adorable Trinity: "Grace be to you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come;" (that is, from God the Father, the Ancient of Days, immutable and eternal); "and from the ſeven ſpirits which are before his throne;" (not to detain you with a critical account of this phraſe, it means the Holy Ghoſt, ſingle in his perſon, but multiplied in his gifts; the variety, fullneſs, and perfection of which, are denoted by this form of expreſſion); "and from Jeſus Chriſt, who is the faithful Witneſs, and the firſt-begotten from the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth." To him you ſee he gives three illuſtrious characters.

1. *The faithful Witneſs*, who came from above, and revealed the whole will of God for our ſalvation; who being the eternal truth, might be abſolutely depended on in the account he was by the

apoſtle to communicate, of the great events of providence towards his church and people. 2. *The firſt begotten from the dead*, declared to be the Son of God with power, by his glorious reſurrection, and triumph over the king of terrors. And, 3. *The Prince of the kings of the earth*; that is, the Lord of nature, to whom every prince and potentate muſt be ſubject, and to the ends of whoſe providence, and the increaſe of whoſe kingdom, all their ſchemes of policy and conqueſt ſhall at laſt be ſubſervient. He then, with great propriety, having mentioned the name, and given a ſhort view of the character of his bleſſed Lord, lays hold of the opportunity to expreſs his own and every other ſinner's obligation to him, in this ſublime aſcription, "Unto him that loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood."

To enter upon the conſideration of the love of Chriſt in its full extent, in its ſource, its expreſſions, and its effects, even thoſe that are ſuggeſted in the text, would far exceed the bounds of a ſingle diſcourſe. What I propoſe, therefore, at this time, in order to prepare your minds, and my own, for the ſolemn action before us, is only to collect into one view ſome of the great and general characters of the love of Chriſt, which are moſt proper to excite our gratitude and praiſe; and then to make ſome practical improvement of it, for your inſtruction and direction.

I. FIRST, then, Let us endeavour to point out ſome of the great general characters of the love of Chriſt. In this I ſhall take care to confine myſelf to ſuch views as are given of it in the holy ſcrip-

tures. And every character given of it there, we are both entitled and obliged to attend to, and improve.

1. Firſt of all, then, You may obſerve, that it is an *everlaſting* love. It took its riſe in the eternal counſels of Heaven. This is a character given of the love of God to his people, Jer. xxxi. 3. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlaſting love: therefore with loving kindneſs have I drawn thee." This expreſſion is often uſed with a double view, to ſhew, on the one hand, its early, its original ſource, and, on the other hand, its perpetual ſtability, and endleſs duration. Pſ. ciii. 17. "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlaſting to everlaſting upon them that fear him; and his righteouſneſs unto childrens' children." Iſ. liv. 7. 8. "For a ſmall moment have I forſaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee, for a moment; but with everlaſting kindneſs will I have mercy on thee, ſaith the Lord thy Redeemer." Having cited theſe paſſages of the Old Teſtament, I muſt juſtify the application of them, by obſerving, that all the covenant-mercies of God to man, in our preſent fallen ſtate, are to be referred to the love of Chriſt, as their price, their ſource, and their ſum. This is plain from innumerable paſſages of ſcripture: Eph. i. 4. 5. "According as he hath choſen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we ſhould be holy, and without blame before him in love: having predeſtinated us unto the adoption of children by Jeſus Chriſt to himſelf, according to the good pleaſure of his will." Eph. iii. 11. "According

to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." For this reason it is, amongst others, that Christ is called, Rev. xiii. 8. "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

I confess, my brethren, we are but ill able to understand, or at least to measure, the import of this truth, That the love of Christ to sinners, or of God in him, was from eternity. All our conceptions are soon lost, and swallowed up, in what is infinite and boundless. But surely it affords matter for the deepest and humblest adoration, as well as for the highest gratitude and joy. Does it not afford matter for adoring wonder, that the plan for redeeming lost sinners, and restoring them to the obedience and enjoyment of God, was the object of the divine purpose from eternity? It appears to be a very conspicuous part, or rather perhaps we are warranted to say, from the scripture-revelation, that it is the chief part of our Creator's will, to which every other part of his providence is subordinate and subservient. Accordingly, in the very passage where my text lies, the Redeemer says, ver. 8. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." Does not this lead us to contemplate the glory of an infinite God, as it shines in this everlasting love? Does it not also afford matter of gratitude to the believing soul, while he considers every vessel of mercy as concerned in this eternal purpose?

I am sensible, my brethren, there may be an abuse and perversion of the doctrine of election, if we think of it as independent of its fruits, and ap-

ply it so as to produce either security or despair. But I despise the wisdom of those persons who would conceal this truth as dangerous, which it hath pleased God distinctly to reveal. It is the root which produceth the plant; but it is the plant which discovers the root. It is the fountain which produceth the streams; but the streams lead us to the fountain. Must not the sinner who by faith has laid hold on a crucified Saviour, and given credit to the word of God in a preached gospel, consider, with admiration, his name written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world? What delight will it give him! What honour does it reflect upon him, at the same time that it destroys the very foundation of arrogance and pride! This is the first, and yet it is but one of many parts of the doctrine of salvation, which at once exalts and abases us; raises our hopes, and forbids us to glory; clothes us with infinite honour, and yet discovers us to be less than nothing: so that we may say with the apostle Paul, after a view of the same subject, Rom. xi. 33. "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past finding out!" This leads me to observe,

2. That the love of Christ is *free* and *unmerited* love. This is a circumstance that is scarcely ever separated from the account given of the love of Christ in scripture. It may be founded even on the infinite disproportion between uncreated excellence and created weakness: Ps. viii. 4. "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man,

that thou viſiteſt him?" Pſ. cxliv. 3. "Lord, what is man, that thou takeſt knowlege of him? or the ſon of man, that thou makeſt account of him?" Nay, as if this were a truth of the utmoſt moment, we have it repeated a third time in almoſt the ſame words: Job, vii. 17. "What is man, that thou ſhouldſt magnify him? and that thou ſhouldſt ſet thine heart upon him?" But this is not all, nor indeed the main thing to be attended to; for the love of Chriſt hath for its object thoſe who were in actual rebellion againſt God, tranſgreſſors of his holy law, and liable to the ſtroke of his juſtice. It was not only to exalt thoſe who were low, or to ſupply thoſe who were needy, that Chriſt came, but to deliver thoſe who were appointed to death: John, iii. 16. "God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth on him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life." Rom. v. 8. "But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet ſinners, Chriſt died for us." Eph. ii. 4. 5. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in ſins, hath quickened us together with Chriſt, (by grace ye are ſaved)." The ſame thing indeed is clearly intimated in the words of the text, *Unto him that loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood.* It is on this account, in particular, that ſalvation, according to the goſpel, is ſaid to be free, and of grace, that is to ſay, an act of unmerited and voluntary kindneſs, which the ſinner had no title to demand: Rom. iii. 23. 24. 25. "For all have ſinned, and come ſhort of the glory of God; being

juſtified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jeſus Chriſt: whom God hath ſet forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteouſneſs for the remiſſion of ſins that are paſt, through the forbearance of God."

Believe it, Chriſtians, this is the proper exerciſe of mercy; and here the divine mercy ſhines and reigns. Without this, it is not obſcured only, but annihilated or deſtroyed. But, oh! what a view does this give us of the love of Chriſt! What an impreſſion will his love make on all thoſe who are truly convinced of their guilt and wretchedneſs! This is the very hinge upon which the whole doctrine of ſalvation turns. I hope you are not diſpoſed to make any oppoſition to it. But, alas! it is not ſufficient to have learned it as a ſcience, to have been taught it as making a part of the Chriſtian faith; it is another matter to have a real and perſonal conviction of it upon the heart. Why is the love of Chriſt ſo cold a ſubject to the generality of the world, but becauſe they have no ſenſe of their guilt and miſery? I am even afraid, that many of the zealous advocates for this truth have but little experience of its power, and live but little under the influence of it in their practice. Where indeed is the perſon to be found, who does full juſtice to the Saviour, and conſiders his love as wholly unmerited and free? The moſt evangelical expreſſions do often conſiſt with the moſt legal and ſelf-righteous affections. Let me try, however, before I leave this particular, if I can make you underſtand it, even though you ſhould not feel it. Suppoſe any of you were, upon the moſt deliberate and

compoſed reflection, upon the moſt particular and cloſe examination, ſenſible that you juſtly deſerved to be baniſhed from the divine preſence, and caſt into everlaſting fire; and that your bleſſed Saviour, when there was no other way to prevent it, did ſave you by the ſacrifice of himſelf; tell me, what would you not owe to him? what words would you find to expreſs your love to him, or your ſenſe of his love to you? There have been ſome convinced ſinners ſo rivetted, if I may ſpeak ſo, to this circumſtance, that they could find little other way of meaſuring the love of Chriſt, but by looking into themſelves; and to whom indeed it has been enough to illuſtrate the greatneſs of his mercy that they were not conſumed. To this add,

3. The love of Chriſt is *unſolicited* love. It took its riſe, not from thoſe who ſtood in need of it, but from him who beſtowed it. It was not the effect of our earneſt importunity, but of his own infinite mercy. This is a circumſtance which we ought by no means to omit, as we find it particularly taken notice of in ſcripture: 1 John, iv. 10. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and ſent his Son to be the propitiation for our ſins;" and in the ſame chapter, verſe 19. "We love him, becauſe he firſt loved us." It is natural to expect, that thoſe who are in miſery ſhould implore the aſſiſtance of thoſe who are able to relieve them, or that thoſe who have been in the offence ſhould humble themſelves before thoſe who have it in their power to puniſh, or to forgive them. But it was quite otherwiſe here. The love of Chriſt diſcovered itſelf, when we were in open rebellion

againſt him; or, in the words of the apoſtle Paul, Rom. v. 10. "While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son."

This affords us at once an illuſtration of the love of Chriſt, and a moving picture of our own deplorable and guilty ſtate. There is ſomething infinitely more noble and generous in extending mercy to the miſerable without waiting for their requeſt, than when it is hardly procured, or as it were extorted by importunity or ſolicitation. And does it not preſent us with a melancholy proſpect of our natural ſtate, that we are not only unworthy to receive, but unwilling to aſk for mercy? I deſire, my brethren, that you may not conſider this as only relating to mankind in general, and the voluntary purpoſe of grace and mery from above, in their favour, but as what makes a part of the experience of every particular convert. As the offer of mercy is made to him freely, ſo he will and muſt be ſenſible how cold and unthankful a reception he hath often given to the propoſal. He will be ſenſible what reſiſtance he hath often made to the deſign of the goſpel; what exception he hath taken at the terms of it; and with how much difficulty he was at laſt induced to comply with it. I am perſuaded there are few circumſtances in the love of Chriſt that are more affecting to a believer, than to remember his own obſtinacy, when a ſinner, and his backwardneſs to accept of the invitations of the Saviour. After he hath reſted his hope on the divine mercy, after he hath been made willing in a day of divine power, and hath obtained ſome comfortable evidence of the divine favour, how does

he tremble at the thoughts of his former reſiſtance! how does he wonder at the patience of God, and adore that victorious love, which ſtormed his heart, as well as paid the price of his redemption!

We find this particularly the caſe with thoſe who having been for a ſeaſon remarkably profligate, are ſaved as brands from the burning. They cannot help recollecting their former condition, their profane madneſs; and wondering, with a mixture of gratitude and fear, that they were not cut off in their wickedneſs, and made monuments of divine vengeance. Far from deſiring a ſhare in the love of Chriſt, they were perhaps doing their utmoſt in contempt of his name, and in oppoſition to his intereſt. Yet, Rom. x. 20. "was he found of them that ſought him not, and made manifeſt to them that aſked not after him:" they were powerfully though ſweetly conſtrained to return to God through him.

4. The love of Chriſt is a *diſtinguiſhing* love, which muſt neceſſarily and greatly inhance the obligation of thoſe who are the objects of it. When one perſon is paſſed by, and another is choſen, either to be delivered from impending danger, or to be made partaker of extraordinary bleſſings, the loſs or ſuffering of the one ſeems to ſet off the ſuperior happineſs of, or the favour beſtowed upon the other. To apply this to the ſubject we are now upon, there is a double diſtinction pointed out in ſcripture; one, of our nature, in oppoſition to the fallen angels; and the other, of particular perſons, as the veſſels of mercy.

(1.) There is an evident diſtinction between

our nature and that of the fallen angels: Heb. ii. 16. "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; he took on him the seed of Abraham." 2 Pet. ii. 4. "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgement." I am sensible, that upon this subject we may be sometimes in danger of speaking with impropriety, especially if we pretend to assign the reasons of God's procedure, any further than he has been pleased himself explicitly to reveal them. There can be no doubt that the Lord of all, God infinitely wise, had the best reasons for his conduct, the most noble and excellent purposes in view in every thing that he ordained; but they are not discovered to us, and perhaps they are above our comprehension. The single point we are called to attend to, is the distinction infinitely gracious which is made in our favour. A Saviour is provided for us, a mercy infinite in itself, and the more highly to be prized, that (Jude, ver. 6.) the angels, our fellow-creatures, "who kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgement of the great day." If we should attempt a comparison between ourselves and these spirits of higher order, we could find no ground of preference in our own favour; perhaps we should find many things that might seem to operate a contrary way; but it is safest in humility and gratitude to say with the psalmist, Psal. cxv. 3. "Our God is in the heavens, he hath done whatsoever he pleased."

(2.) But this is not all; there is alſo a diſtinction of particular perſons as the veſſels of mercy. Since I am introducing this ſubject, to prevent miſtakes, I muſt obſerve, that every ſinner of the race of Adam who ſhall periſh eternally, ſhall alſo periſh moſt juſtly; his blood ſhall lie at his own door, and he ſhall be found guilty of rejecting the counſel of God againſt himſelf. At the ſame time, all who are effectually brought to the ſaving knowledge of God through Chriſt, ſhall be obliged to confeſs, that they were brought in by Almighty power, or, in the language of the Holy Ghoſt, 1 Pet. i. 2. that they are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through ſanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and ſprinkling of the blood of Jeſus Chriſt."

On this, as on the former branch of this head, it may be obſerved, that we muſt not preſume to penetrate into the unſearchable depth of the divine counſels; but at the ſame time it muſt be remembered, that we are not permitted, and cannot pretend, to find the reaſons of preference in ourſelves; for no fleſh may glory in his preſence. God in many paſſages aſſerts his own ſovereignty and perfect liberty in the diſtribution of his grace: Rom. ix. 15. 16. "For he ſaith to Moſes, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compaſſion on whom I will have compaſſion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that ſheweth mercy." And again, in the 18th verſe, "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." Nothing can be harder, in-

deed, than for the proud and carnal mind to bow before the ſovereignty of God; yet nothing is more evident, than that the deſtination of the veſſels of mercy doth not proceed upon the ordinary grounds of human eſtimation. Nay, there ſeems to be an expreſs deſign to ſtain the pride of all human glory: 1 Cor. i. 26. 27. "For you ſee your calling, brethren, how that not many wiſe men after the fleſh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath choſen the fooliſh things of the world, to confound the wiſe; and God hath choſen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty." Experience daily illuſtrates this; for while we ſee ſome brought to an entire ſubmiſſion to the goſpel, and an obedient conformity to the will of God, we ſee many of equal or of greater ability and endowments of mind, and favoured with equal or ſuperior advantages and opportunities of inſtruction, who yet continue to bear the marks of reprobation. The ſame mercies diſpoſe one to thankfulneſs, and inſpire another with pride. The ſame trials will ſoften one heart, and harden another. All this our Redeemer makes the ſubject of a ſolemn thankſgiving to God, Luke, x. 21. "In that hour Jeſus rejoiced in ſpirit, and ſaid, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou haſt hid theſe things from the wiſe and prudent, and haſt revealed them unto babes: even ſo, Father, for ſo it ſeemed good in thy ſight." Who that believes, in this aſſembly, will preſume to take the leaſt part of the honour of it to himſelf, or will refuſe to adore the diſtinguiſhing love of God? And how often muſt thoſe who bear the

meſſage of peace be obliged to ſeek the cauſe of an unſucceſsful goſpel in the counſels of the Moſt High! 2 Cor. iv. 3. "But if our goſpel be hid, it is hid to them that are loſt; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, leſt the light of the glorious goſpel of Chriſt, who is the image of God, ſhould ſhine unto them."

5. The love of Chriſt was an *expensive* love. So great a deliverance would have called for the moſt humble and thankful acknowledgement, though it had been as much *without price* to the Saviour as to the ſinner. But oh! my brethren, how far was it otherwiſe! and what ſhall we think or ſay of the love of Chriſt, when we conſider how much it coſt him to procure ſalvation for us! when we conſider the depth of his humiliation, the variety, the continuance, and the greatneſs of his ſufferings! You cannot but be ſenſible how frequent mention is made of this in ſcripture, or rather how ſeldom it is omitted, when the love of Chriſt is introduced at all. It is the circumſtance particularly pointed at in the text, *Unto him that loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood.* The ſame thing appears from the other doxologies, or acts of worſhip to the Saviour, which are contained in this book, as Rev. v. 9. "And they ſung a new ſong, ſaying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the ſeals thereof: for thou waſt ſlain, and haſt redeemed us to God by thy blood." It appears alſo from the frequent mention of the croſs of Chriſt, on which his ſufferings were completed. Nay, of ſo much moment was this, that it ſeems to

have made the ſum of the goſpel, as preached by the apoſtles: 1 Cor. ii. 2. "For I am determined not to know any thing among you, ſave Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified."

The ſufferings of Chriſt, then, ought to be ever preſent to the mind of the believer. The neceſſity and importance of this is plain from both the ſeals of the covenant of grace. The water in baptiſm repreſents the blood of Chriſt; and we are told, Rom. vi. 3. "Know ye not, that ſo many of us as were baptiſed into Jeſus Chriſt, were baptiſed into his death." The inſtitution of the Lord's ſupper alſo had the remembrance of Chriſt's ſufferings as its direct and immediate intention: 1 Cor. xi. 24. 25. 26. "And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and ſaid, Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the ſame manner alſo he took the cup, when he had ſupped, ſaying, This cup is the new teſtament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do ſhew the Lord's death till he come." Remember, then, Chriſtians, how he left the throne of his glory, and took upon him the form of a ſervant. Remember him deſpiſed and rejected of men, a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief. His life indeed was one continued ſcene of ſorrow, from the cradle to the grave.

I hope the particulars of his ſufferings are not ſtrangers to your meditations: may the Lord enable you to contemplate them with faith and love. Remember his agony in the garden, when he ſuf-

fered from his Father's hand: For "it pleaſed the Lord to bruiſe him, and to put him to grief." Think, O Chriſtian! what it was to redeem a loſt world, when you hear him ſaying, as in John, xii. 27. "Now is my ſoul troubled; and what ſhall I ſay? Father, ſave me from this hour: but for this cauſe came I unto this hour. Remember him ſeized by the treachery of one of his own diſciples; accuſed and arraigned as a felon; dragged to the tribunal of an unrighteous judge; clothed with a purple robe, and crowned with thorns in deriſion of his kingly office; ſeverely ſcourged; blindfolded, buffeted, and ſpit upon; and the whole indeed ſo conducted by the righteous permiſſion and unſeen direction of divine Providence, that hardly any expreſſion, either of cruelty or contumely, was omitted. Ceaſe to wonder, my dear friends, that profane wretches deride the ſigns of his ſufferings, when you remember, that the blinded rabble attending the important trial were permitted to inſult him, ſaying, "Prophecy unto us, thou Chriſt, who is he that ſmote thee."

Remember him going forth without the camp, bearing his reproach. Remember that ſpotleſs victim the Lamb of God, ſtretched upon a croſs, and nailed to the accurſed tree, while he ſuffered all that the extremity of bodily pain, and the moſt unutterable anguiſh of ſpirit, could poſſibly inflict upon an innocent creature. No wonder that the earth did ſhake, that the rocks were rent, and the natural ſun refuſed to give his light, when the Sun of Righteouſneſs was under ſo great an eclipſe. Did the Saviour then willingly ſubmit to all this pain and

ignominy for our ſakes? Was not this the moſt expenſive love? and can we refuſe to ſay with the multitude of the heavenly hoſt, Rev. v. 12. "Worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain, to receive power, and riches, and wiſdom, and ſtrength, and honour, and glory, and bleſſing?"

6. The love of Chriſt was the moſt generous and *diſintereſted* love. The ſuppoſition or ſuſpicion of any intereſted views in what one perſon does for another, nay, even the poſſibility of his ſerving any purpoſe of his own at the ſame time, greatly abates the value of any favour, and leſſens the ſenſe of obligation. But nothing of this kind can be ſo much as imagined here. It was giving to thoſe from whom he could receive nothing, and emptying himſelf of that glory to which the whole creation could not make any addition. The truth is, we ought to conſider in the ſame light every other mercy of God, as well as the love of Chriſt his Son, which was the ſource of them all: Job, xxii. 2. 3. 4. "Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wiſe may be profitable unto himſelf? Is it any pleaſure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him that thou makeſt thy ways perfect? Will he reprove thee for fear of thee? will he enter with thee into judgement?" And to the ſame purpoſe, Job, xxxv. 5. 6. 7. 8. "Look unto the heavens, and ſee, and behold the clouds, which are higher than thou. If thou ſinneſt, what doſt thou againſt him? Or if thy tranſgreſſions be multiplied, what doſt thou unto him? If thou be righteous, what giveſt thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand? Thy wicked-

neſs may hurt a man as thou art, and thy righteouſneſs may profit the ſon of man." The eſſential glory and happineſs of the Deity, and conſequently of the *Eternal Word*, can receive no addition, nor ſuffer the ſmalleſt diminution, from the ſtate of any or of all his creatures. He was infinitely happy in himſelf from all eternity, before there was man or angel to ſerve him, and would have continued ſo though they had never been. How infinitely then are we indebted to this generous Saviour! with what gratitude ought we to celebrate his pure and diſintereſted love, who graciouſly interpoſed in our behalf, and delivered us from the wrath of God, by bearing it in our room!

7. In the *laſt* place, the love of Chriſt was a moſt *fruitful, active,* and *beneficent* love. The effects of it are unſpeakably great; the bleſſings which we reap from it are not only infinite in number, but inеſtimable in value. They are indeed almoſt as valuable as their price was coſtly. It was not to be ſuppoſed, that ſo great a perſon would be employed upon a trivial work, or an infinite price paid for an inconſiderable purchaſe. But how, my brethren, ſhall we form any adequate conception of the benefits that flow from our Redeemer's death? All that is neceſſary for us, all that is deſirable to us, all that is truly precious in itſelf, is effectually made ours: Rom. viii. 32. "He that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all things?" 1 Cor. i. 30. "But of him are ye in Chriſt Jeſus, who of God is made unto us wiſdom, and righteouſneſs, and ſanctification, and redemption."

(1.) We are through Chriſt delivered from condemnation: Rom. viii. 1. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Chriſt Jeſus, who walk not after the fleſh, but after the Spirit." Do you know any thing of a ſenſe of guilt? Does your Creator's power and greatneſs ever make you afraid? Have you trembled at the approach of the king of terrors? or of that day of righteous judgement, when God ſhall render to every man according to his works? Chriſt our Saviour hath delivered us "from the wrath to come." This is the firſt ground of the apoſtle's aſcription in the text: *Unto him that loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood.* Hear alſo the apoſtle's triumphant aſſurance, Rom. viii. 33. 34. "Who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that juſtifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Chriſt that died, yea rather, that is riſen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who alſo maketh interceſſion for us."

(2.) Through Chriſt the believer is aſſured, that he ſhall receive every thing that is neceſſary for him in his paſſage through the world. The Spirit is purchaſed and beſtowed to lead him into all truth, and to ſanctify him wholly. Chriſt did not ſatisfy himſelf with cancelling our guilt, but made effectual proviſion for the renovation of our nature. The Spirit is alſo given as a ſpirit of conſolation. He is ſtyled *the Comforter*, who ſhall *abide with us for ever*. Without enlarging at this time on the comforts of the goſpel, they are ſufficiently commended in the following words of the apoſtle, Phil. iv. 7. "And the peace of God, which paſſeth all under-

ſtanding, ſhall keep your hearts and minds through Chriſt Jeſus." To theſe add a ſanctified providence. As many as are reconciled to God through Chriſt, may reſt ſatisfied that all things ſhall work together for their good. The moſt oppoſite events, proſperity and adverſity, health and ſickneſs, honour and reproach, nay, every thing without exception, ſhall be ſubſervient to their intereſt: 1 Cor. iii. 21. 22. 23. "For all things are yours: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things preſent, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Chriſt's; and Chriſt is God's."

3. Through Chriſt the believer is entitled to everlaſting glory and happineſs in the enjoyment of God to all eternity. This was among the laſt things he told his diſciples before he left the world: John, xiv. 2. 3. "In my Father's houſe are many manſions; if it were not ſo, I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myſelf, that where I am, there ye may be alſo." You are this day to commemorate your Redeemer, who died once upon a croſs, but who has now been many ages upon a throne: Rev. i. 18. "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." He is able to make his faithful diſciples more than conquerors over all their ſpiritual enemies; or, as it is expreſſed in the paſſage where the text lies, he will make them "kings and prieſts to God and his Father." In the paſſage immediately preceding the text, he is

called the firſt-begotten from the dead; and elſewhere we are told, that the order of the reſurrection is, "Chriſt the firſt fruits, and afterwards they that are Chriſt's at his coming." It ſhall both finiſh and illuſtrate his love, when he ſhall raiſe them that ſleep in the duſt; when he "ſhall change their vile bodies, that they may be faſhioned like unto his own glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to ſubdue all things unto himſelf." At preſent, how imperfect are our diſcoveries! how weak and feeble our conceptions! how cold and languid our affections! Now we "ſee through a glaſs darkly, but then face to face." O how joyful to every believer the deliverance from a ſtate of ſuffering, temptation, and ſin, and the poſſeſſion of perfect holineſs and unchangeable happineſs! And O how great the oppoſition of the future to the preſent ſtate! No more ſtruggling with the evils of life; no more perplexity or anxious care for food and raiment; no more diſtreſs from ſickneſs or pain; no priſons nor oppreſſors there; no liars nor ſlanderers there; no complaints of an evil heart there; but the moſt perfect ſecurity of ſtate, and the moſt unremitted vigour of affection. How ſhall the ranſomed of the Lord then ſing their Redeemer's praiſe! Rev. i. 5. 6. "Unto him that loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and prieſts unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

II. I PROCEED now to make ſome practical improvement of what hath been ſaid. And,

1. Let me intreat every perſon in this houſe to make the following obvious reflection: If ſo great are the obligations of believers to the love of Chriſt, how dreadful muſt be the condition of thoſe who die in their ſins! The one of theſe explains and illuſtrates the other. The believer can owe but little, if the deliverance is not great. I have been lately ſpeaking of the happineſs of the elect of God, in being freed from the miſeries of the preſent ſtate; but, O! unhappy they who ſhall depart from this life unreconciled to God: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlaſting life; but he that believeth not the Son, ſhall not ſee life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." When the heirs of glory "ſit down with Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of their Father," the unbelieving and impenitent ſhall be caſt into the lake of fire, "where the ſmoke of their torment aſcendeth up for ever and ever." I deſire to put you in mind of this, under the impreſſion of this important truth, That nothing but the ſovereign grace of God can make the warning effectual; and therefore beſeeching him to accompany it with the powerful operation of his Holy Spirit. At the ſame time, I aſſure you, that if you reject the counſel of God againſt yourſelves, your blood ſhall be upon your own heads. Do not pretend to ſay, 'If it depends upon election, and almighty grace is neceſſary, all our endeavours will be in vain.' Secret things belong only to God. His purpoſe is not more unchangeable than his promiſe is faithful. Nay, though you may not be able to ſee it, nor I to explain it, they are perfectly conſiſtent the one with the other.

He will be "juſt when he ſpeaketh, and clear when he judgeth;" and therefore give heed to the exhortation, not in my words, but in the words of the Holy Ghoſt, Phil. ii. 12. 13. "Work out your own ſalvation with fear and trembling. For it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleaſure."

Know, I beſeech you, your own mercy. The neceſſity is urgent, and the time is uncertain. With what propriety may the words of the apoſtle be addreſſed to every perſon, in every ſituation, and in every age! 2 Cor. vi. 1. 2. "We then, as workers together with him, beſeech you alſo, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain: for he ſaith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of ſalvation have I ſuccoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of ſalvation." Happy they who ſtill hear the joyful ſound! Happy the ſinner who is not yet gone to his own place! Flee, flee to your ſtrong hold, ye priſoners of hope. Conſider the aggravated guilt and ſeven-fold condemnation of deſpiſers of the goſpel. All that you have heard of the love of Chriſt ſerves to ſhew the danger of his enemies. Read the words immediately following the aſcription of which the text is a part, (ver. 7.): "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye ſhall ſee him; and they alſo which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth ſhall wail becauſe of him." Read alſo this awful deſcription: Rev. vi. 14. 15. 16. 17. "And the heaven departed as a ſcroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and iſland were moved out of their places: and the

kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond-man, and every free-man, hid themſelves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains; and ſaid to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that ſitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who ſhall be able to ſtand?" Mark this extraordinary expreſſion, *the wrath of the Lamb*, that meekeſt and gentleſt of all creatures; teaching us, that his former meekneſs, and patience, and ſuffering, ſhall inflame and exaſperate his future vengeance. Could I conduct you to the gates of the infernal priſon, I am perſuaded you would hear Judas Iſcariot, and all other treacherous diſciples, crying out, 'O that Chriſt had never come in the fleſh! The thunders of Sinai would have been leſs terrible. The frowns of Jeſus of Nazareth are inſupportable. O the dreadful, painful, and uncommon wrath of a Saviour on the judgement-ſeat!'— The Lord ſpeak conſolation to his own people, and pierce the hearts of his enemies, that they may be brought to repentance.

2. You may learn from what has been ſaid, that the great and leading motive to obedience under the goſpel, is a deep and grateful ſenſe of redeeming love. This runs through the whole writings of the New Teſtament. It binds the believer to his duty; it animates him to diligence; it fills him with comfort: 2 Cor. v. 14. 15. "For the love of Chriſt conſtraineth us, becauſe we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and

that he died for all, that they which live, ſhould not henceforth live unto themſelves, but unto him which died for them, and roſe again." Gal. ii. 19. 20. "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Chriſt: nevertheleſs I live; yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the fleſh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himſelf for me." That this motive will have the moſt powerful influence on the believer's conduct, is evident both from reaſon and experience. No principle takes a faſter hold of the human heart than gratitude for favours received. If the mercies be cordially accepted, and highly eſteemed, which is certainly the caſe here, nothing can withſtand its influence. It reconciles the heart to the moſt difficult duties; nay, it even diſpoſes the believer to court the opportunity of making ſome ſignal ſacrifice, in teſtimony of his attachment. Love, ſincere and fervent, overcomes all difficulties; or rather, indeed, it changes their nature, and makes labour and ſuffering a ſource of delight and ſatisfaction. Let but the Saviour's intereſt or honour ſeem to be concerned, and the believer, who feels how much he is indebted to him, will chearfully embrace the call, and ſet no bounds to his compliance. This ſhows how much beauty and force there is in our Lord's manner of recommending love and compaſſion to our fellow-creatures, Matth. xxv. 40. "And the King ſhall anſwer, and ſay unto them, Verily, I ſay unto you, In as much as ye have done it unto one of the leaſt of theſe my brethren, ye have

done it unto me." But to what purpose do I dwell upon this subject? for a sense of redeeming love is not only the most powerful motive to every other duty, but is itself the possession and exercise of the first duty of the moral law, as well as the sum and substance of evangelical holiness, viz. the love of God. The first sin, by which our nature fell, was a distrust of and departure from God; and the malignity of every sin we continue to commit, consists in giving that room in the heart to something else, which is due only to God. A sense of redeeming love, therefore, expels the enemy, and makes up the breach, as thereby "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts."

3. You may see, from what has been said, the necessity of a particular application of the truths of the gospel to ourselves, and the reliance of every believer upon them as the foundation of his own hope. I have sometimes had occasion to observe to you, that it is very doubtful, whether any person can so much as approve in his judgement the truths of the gospel, till he perceive his own interest in them, and their necessity to his peace. Certain it is, the world that lieth in wickedness generally despises them. However, I shall admit as a thing possible, that a bad man may, either by imitation, or the power of outward evidence, embrace the gospel as a system of truth. But surely the love of Christ can neither be a source of comfort, nor a principle of obedience, unless he consider it as terminating upon himself. Without this, the whole is general, cold, and unintersting. But when he considers, not only the certainty of the

truth, but the extent of the invitation, and can say, with Thomas, "My Lord, and my God," then indeed the ties are laid upon him; then indeed he begins to feel their constraining power; then he not only contemplates the glory of God in the grace of redemption, but chearfully and unfeignedly consecrates himself to the service of his Redeemer. This leads me, in the

4th and *last* place, to invite every sinner in this assembly to accept of Christ as his Saviour, and to rely upon him as he is offered in the gospel. To the secure and insensible, I know it is in vain to speak. But if you see your own danger, what should hinder your belief and reliance on the Saviour? If you either need or desire deliverance, what with-holds your acceptance of it, when it is not only freely offered to you, but earnestly urged upon you? Can you doubt the testimony of "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness?" The blessings of his purchase belong not to one people or family, but to "every nation under heaven." The commission of those who bear his message is unlimited: Mark, xvi. 15. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." They are offered, not only to the virtuous, the decent, and the regular, but to the *chief* of sinners: 1 Tim. i. 15. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." Whoever heareth these glad tidings, he dishonoureth God, he poureth contempt on his Saviour's love, and he wrongeth his own soul, if he does not receive consolation from them. Be not hindered by what you

ſee in yourſelves, unleſs you are in love with ſin, and afraid of being divorced from it. The goſpel is preached to ſinners. It does not expect to find them, but it is intended to make them, holy. A deep and inward ſenſe of your own unworthineſs, unleſs it is prevented by the deceiver, ſhould only make you more highly eſteem the grace of the goſpel, and more willingly depend on your Redeemer's love.

I conclude with the invitation which he himſelf gives to the weary ſinner, Matth. xi. 28. 29. 30. "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye ſhall find reſt unto your ſouls. For my yoke is eaſy, and my burden is light."

SERMON VII.

REDEMPTION THE SUBJECT OF ADMIRATION TO THE ANGELS.

1 PETER, i. 12. laſt clauſe.

Which things the angels deſire to look into.

ACTION SERMON.

MY brethren, A ſerious and attentive mind, on peruſing the ſacred volume, can hardly help being often ſtruck both with the ſentiments and language of the inſpired writers on the ſubject of redemption. With what a deep veneration of ſoul, with what warmth of affection, with what tranſports of adoring thankfulneſs, do they ſpeak of the plan laid by divine wiſdom, for the ſalvation of loſt ſinners, by the croſs of Chriſt! A perſon poſſeſſed only of underſtanding and taſte, may admire theſe ſallies of holy fervour, for the elevation of thought, and boldneſs of expreſſion, which a man's being in good earneſt on an intereſting ſubject doth naturally inſpire. But happy, happy, and only happy, that ſoul who from an inward ap-

probation can receive, reliſh, and apply thoſe glorious things that are ſpoken of the name, character, and undertaking of the Saviour of ſinners.

You may obſerve, that there are two different ſubjects, in general, on which the writers of the New Teſtament are apt to break out, and enlarge, when they are conſidering or commending the myſtery of redemption. One is, the glory of God, as it appears in it; the luſtre of divine power, wiſdom, and grace, which reigns through the whole. The ſecond is, the unſpeakable intereſt which we have in it, from the danger eſcaped on the one hand, and the exalted hopes to which we are raiſed by it, on the other. I cannot help putting you in mind, that theſe two things are ſo inſeparably joined, that none can forget or be inſenſible of any one of them, without in reality deſpiſing both. And as a view of the divine glory ſeems moſt immediately calculated to aſſiſt and continue a proper worſhipping frame, I intend that this ſhall lead the way in our meditations on this occaſion. The ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper is called the *Euchariſt*, or ſacrifice of praiſe; and therefore very fit for adoring contemplation.

The words which I have read are the concluſion of the apoſtle Peter's account of the gradual unfolding of this great deſign of Providence; and they contain a ſtriking and extraordinary ſentiment, That the angels themſelves are filled with a holy curioſity to ſearch into the myſtery of redemption. Few commentators have failed to obſerve, that the word here tranſlated *to look into*, properly ſignifies, *to ſtoop* or *bend down, and examine with the*

strictest attention. This, my brethren, gives us a very exalted view of the scheme of redemption, as a leading design in the government of God, that these pure and exalted spirits, not only adore it as a part of their Creator's will, but that they are lost and swallowed up in the contemplation of it, and see such a series of wonders, as they are not able to comprehend. If this is so, let us no longer postpone the following reflection: How much more are we, the interested parties, called to adore and dwell on this mystery of love, on which our salvation from deserved wrath, and possession of infinite felicity to all eternity, is suspended! I cannot find a more proper subject for an introduction to the sacred and solemn service of this day; and therefore I beg your attention, while I endeavour, in dependence on divine grace, to illustrate the assertion in the text, by mentioning some particulars in the mystery of redemption, which are probably the subject of adoring inquiry, and perhaps holy astonishment, to those celestial spirits. Having done this, I will conclude with some improvement of the subject, for assisting you in your present duty.

I. FIRST, then, we are to mention those circumstances in the mystery of redemption which are probably the subject of adoring inquiry, or perhaps holy astonishment, to the angels of God. The angels, though they are exalted creatures, are yet plainly of limited capacity. There are many things of which they are ignorant: Matth. xxiv. 36. "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no,

not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." And as their employment is to be meſſengers and miniſters of God, with ſome inferior agency, in the conduct of his providence; ſo it is not to be doubted that much of their happineſs conſiſts in the contemplation of the nature and glory of God, as diſcovered in his works. They are repreſented in the book of Job as joyful witneſſes of the creation and birth of this lower world: Job, xxxviii. 6. 7. "Whereupon are the foundations thereof faſtened? or who laid the corner-ſtone thereof? when the morning-ſtars ſang together, and all the ſons of God ſhouted for joy." The ſtate of the church is alſo repreſented as diſcovering to them the divine wiſdom: Eph. iii. 10. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wiſdom of God."

Let us therefore conſider what circumſtances in the myſtery of redemption may be ſuppoſed to ſtrike them moſt with aſtoniſhment and wonder. This we cannot do without finding ourſelves greatly intereſted, and called to the deepeſt humility, and at the ſame time the higheſt exerciſe of gratitude and love. And,

1. The firſt thing I ſhall mention is the incarnation of the Son of God; the union of the divine and human nature, by the Word's being made fleſh. This is indeed the firſt thing to be conſidered, both in order and in rank. O wonderful union indeed! Well might the apoſtle ſay, 1 Tim. iii. 16. "Without controverſy, great is the myſtery of godlineſs, God was manifeſt in the fleſh, juſtified in the Spi-

rit, ſeen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." But what view muſt the angels have of this event? thoſe glorious and active beings, who are thus deſcribed, Pſal. civ. 4. "Who maketh his angels ſpirits, his miniſters a flaming fire." Their knowledge of the nature of God, as a pure and immaculate ſpirit, as the eternal, uncreated, ſelf-exiſtent Father of ſpirits, and of the Son, as one with the Father, who "thought it no robbery to be equal with God," muſt deeply aſtoniſh them at this marvellous humiliation; that he ſhould become one perſon with a creature, and that with a creature lower than themſelves; for it is expreſsly ſaid, that "he was made a little lower than the angels." How aſtoniſhing, that he who is the Lord of angels, and whoſe diſtance from the higheſt of all created ſpirits is not great only, but infinite, ſhould become a man, by taking to himſelf a true body and a reaſonable ſoul!

It is more than probable from our text, eſpecially when compared with the context, and other paſſages of ſcripture, that this diſcovery was made to the angels only gradually, as it was to men. They could not but have intimations of God's purpoſe of mercy, which was begun and carried on immediately after the fall; this however was done in a manner comparatively dark and obſcure. There have been indeed ſome who ſeem to me to have gone a little beyond their depth; and who have ſuppoſed, that God diſcovered to the angels, even before the creation of man, the fall, which he foreſaw, and the method by which he propoſed to recover a

chosen remnant, viz. the incarnation of his own Son; that the superior honour done to an inferior creature, stirred up the pride and envy of Lucifer, and his associates; and that in this consisted their guilt and apostasy, for which they were punished with an immediate banishment from the abodes of bliss, and are now reserved in chains under darkness to the day of judgement.

This at best is but mere conjecture. It seems much more probable, that they learned the several parts of this great design of mercy in their gradual accomplishment. It cannot indeed be doubted, that the angels who were concerned in the ministry of providence, must have known early of the intended redemption, and the Redeemer. Yet when they are said, as in the text, to look into the things preached in the gospel, it gives reason to conclude, that the incarnation and sufferings of Christ was, with regard to them as well as us, a mystery hid from ages and generations. Now, how could those holy angels who retained their integrity but be filled with amazement at the depth of divine councils, when they saw themselves obliged to worship a man, to worship a feeble infant, born in a stable, and lying in a manger? when they found themselves charged with publishing the glad tidings? as in Luke, ii. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger.

And ſuddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hoſt, praiſing God, and ſaying, Glory to God in the higheſt, and on earth peace, good-will towards men."

There is one circumſtance in the incarnation itſelf, which ought not to be omitted, becauſe it is mentioned in ſcripture, and is certainly as aſtoniſhing as any, That he was not only made fleſh, but ſent *in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh*. What ſo oppoſite to the nature of God as ſin? And what ſo ſurpriſing, as that the Son of God, though without ſin, yet ſhould in all reſpects outwardly be like to ſinners? that he ſhould be born of a ſinner, taken for a ſinner, treated as a ſinner, and at laſt crucified with the utmoſt ignominy, as a more than ordinary ſinner? I doubt not but thoſe angels who looked with wonder on him in the manger, looked with ſtill greater wonder on him on the croſs; that the whole hoſt of them are conſidering this with holy wonder ſtill; and that it ſhall be the theme of eternal wonder to the innumerable company about the throne. This leads me to obſerve,

2. That another circumſtance which muſt afford matter for adoring inquiry to the celeſtial ſpirits, is the ſubſtitution of an innocent perſon in the room of the guilty, and his ſuffering from the hand of God. When man's apoſtaſy was firſt known, I reckon we may affirm with ſufficient certainty, that it could not enter into any created mind, that his recovery was poſſible. Many are even of opinion, that ſome paſſages of ſcripture carry in them an intimation, that it had been propoſed, and as it were a trial made, in the councils of heaven, among af-

ſembled angels, whether any remedy could be found for the guilt and apoſtaſy of man; and that none was found either able or willing to ſtand in his room; as in that of the pſalmiſt, cited by the apoſtle to the Hebrews, chap. x. 5. 6. 7. "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he ſaith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldſt not, but a body haſt thou prepared me: In burnt-offerings and ſacrifices for ſin, thou haſt had no pleaſure: Then ſaid I, Lo, I come (in the volume of thy book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God." And in the prophecies of Iſaiah, chap. lix. 16. "And he ſaw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no interceſſor; therefore his arm brought ſalvation unto him; and his righteouſneſs, it ſuſtained him." I will not take upon me to affirm this interpretation of theſe paſſages; but the firſt of them, which is applied by the apoſtle to Chriſt, certainly implies, that he undertook the redemption of ſinners when other ſacrifices were found ineffectual.

Now, my brethren, let us proſecute the reflection pointed out by the text. The angels had always hitherto ſeen innocence and holineſs attended with peace and felicity, and they had ſeen the apoſtate ſpirits laid under an irreverſible ſentence of condemnation. It is probable they looked upon it as manifeſtly founded on the nature of God, that he could not puniſh the innocent, and that he could not but puniſh the guilty. What aſtoniſhment, then, muſt it have given them, what new views of the boundleſs ſovereignty and unſearchable wiſdom of the Moſt High muſt it have opened to them, when they heard him ſaying, "Deliver him from

going down into the pit, I have found a ranſom!" How muſt they with wonder dwell on this part of the providence of a wiſe, holy, juſt, and gracious God, that the pure and innocent Jeſus, the beloved of the Father, ſhould make his appearance in this lower world, the abode of guilty creatures, under manifeſt tokens of their Creator's diſpleaſure! that he ſhould not only enter on the ſcene in the weakneſs of infancy, but with every circumſtance of meanneſs and baſeneſs! How often muſt they have been put to a ſtand, what to think of the ſeverity and perſecution, the contempt and oppoſition which he met with from thoſe very ſinners whom he came to ſave!

But above all, how muſt they have been at a loſs to comprehend his being expoſed, not only to the contempt of man, but to the wrath of God! For "it pleaſed the Lord to bruiſe him, he hath put him to grief." What muſt have been the ſurpriſe of that miniſter of Providence, who was ſent "from heaven to ſtrengthen" him, when he found him under an inexpreſſible agony of ſuffering, making ſupplication with ſtrong crying and tears, ſaying, "Father, if it be poſſible, let this cup paſs from me!" And what created ſpirit is able to reach the unfathomable meaning of his complaint upon the croſs, "My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?" In the ſufferings of an innocent perſon in the room of the guilty, in the ſufferings of the well-beloved Son of God from his Father's hand, there is ſuch an unſearchable depth, as no finite underſtanding is able to comprehend. At firſt view, it ſeems to contradict the rectitude and

holineſs of the divine nature; but on a nearer inſpection, there is ſuch a ſtriking diſcovery of wiſdom, holineſs, juſtice, and mercy, that angels deſire with a holy curioſity to contemplate and adore it.

3. As immediately founded upon the former, another circumſtance in the plan of redemption through Chriſt, which will afford matter of wonder to the celeſtial ſpirits, is the free juſtification of ſinners, and their acceptance with God, through the imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt. If it appears aſtoniſhing, that God, who diſtributes favour and puniſhment with the moſt perfect equity, ſhould puniſh the innocent, it appears equally ſo, that he ſhould ſhew favour to the guilty; that he ſhould forgive their ſins, accept their perſons, and viſit them with his loving-kindneſs, and all this for the merit and obedience of another. What! (may it be ſaid), is he not unchangeably holy? Is he not of purer eyes than to behold iniquity? Are we not aſſured that evil cannot dwell with him, nor ſinners ſtand in his preſence? How ſhall he receive into his favour theſe offending rebels? how ſhall he take into his boſom ſuch polluted wretches? And what can be the meaning of imputation? Can perſonal worth be transferred? Can he commit ſo great an error, as to view them with complacency for the merit of another?

Muſt not this appear a new and extraordinary plan to the angels, who, by perſonal and perfect obedience, retain the favour of their Creator, and who had been hitherto ſtrangers to the influence and interceſſion of a mediator? who had ſeen no ſuch

thing take place when their brethren ſinned? Heb. ii. 16. "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the ſeed of Abraham." The holy angels, not inclined to ſay, as more preſumptuous men too often do, "Let us continue in ſin, that grace may abound," will rather ſay, "Let us ſtep aſide, and ſee this great ſight." They will then ſee, that there is no way more proper for maintaining the dignity of the divine government; nay, that it is the only way by which thoſe who have been ſinners can be received into favour. They will ſee and confeſs, that there is no circumſtance whatever that tends more to level the pride of the ſinner's heart, and bring him to univerſal ſubmiſſion, and abſolute ſubjection to the ſovereignty of God. I am perſuaded, indeed, that even angels who never ſinned have more of ſubmiſſion to the divine ſovereignty, and dependence on the abſolute grace of their Creator, than many are apt to imagine; yet ſurely our world is the great theatre of divine grace. The ſame infinite benignity which ſhews itſelf in heaven in favour to the worthy, is diſplayed on earth, to the aſtoniſhment of heaven itſelf, in mercy to the guilty.

Suffer me, my brethren, to embrace this opportunity of obſerving, that nothing is more groundleſs than the accuſation of men of corrupt minds, againſt the doctrine of divine grace, as encouraging to ſin. It hath the very contrary effect, and that on theſe two accounts.

(1.) It is ſo mortifying to human pride, that the power of ſin muſt be broken at leaſt, before it can be truly and cordially received. There is not ſo

difficult a duty in the whole compaſs of the moral law, as an unfeigned denial of our own righteouſneſs and ſtrength, and being willing to count all things but loſs for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt. To receive forgiveneſs as mere mercy to thoſe who had deſerved to periſh, without any complaint, either againſt the ſtrictneſs of the law, or the ſeverity of the ſanction, is not ſo eaſy as many ſeem to imagine, and what no man is brought to but by the Holy Ghoſt.

(2.) As the ſinner muſt be really ſubjected to God the Creator, before he can lay hold of his mercy through Chriſt the Redeemer; ſo it is plain, that the moſt effectual meaſures are taken to continue and perpetuate this ſubjection. It is plain, that the infinite unmerited love of God to his ſoul, is the moſt powerful and operative principle of obedience that can dwell in the human heart: 2 Cor. v. 14. 15. "For the love of Chriſt conſtraineth us; becauſe we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live ſhould not henceforth live unto themſelves, but unto him which died for them, and roſe again." Such confidence has the ſame apoſtle in the ſtrength of this principle, he bids defiance to all trials and oppoſition: Rom. viii. 35. "Who ſhall ſeparate us from the love of Chriſt? Shall tribulation, or diſtreſs, or perſecution, or famine, or nakedneſs, or peril, or ſword?" And again, ver. 38. 39. "For I am perſuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things preſent, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, ſhall

be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." These great principles of sanctification are new to the angels. When therefore they see the holiness of God shining in the free justification of sinners through Christ, it will add new force and new meaning to that song of praise which they are represented as singing, Rev. iv. 8. "And they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

4. In the *last* place, Another circumstance in the mystery of the gospel which will be matter of wonder to the angels, is the application of redemption, or the manner and means of translating sinners "from darkness to light," and "from the power of Satan unto God." Before the plan of divine grace with regard to fallen man was opened to them, they had seen no examples of sinners but the fallen angels. From their irreversible sentence, and blaspheming rage in their torment, those who remained in their happy state, would be apt to conclude, that there could be no recovery for a creature who had once departed from his integrity at all. But when they learned something of the divine purpose for the salvation of fallen man, especially the amazing and unspeakable grace that appeared in the appointment of the Mediator, and the universal unlimited offer of salvation in his name, what would be the effect? I dare say, they would certainly conclude, that it would be received with the highest transports of joy, by all those unhappy criminals who were lying under the curse of a broken law. Accordingly the angel, in his message

to the ſhepherds, calls it "good tidings of great joy to all people."

What then muſt have been their additional ſurpriſe, when they heard the prophet ſaying, Iſ. liii. 1. "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" when they ſaw that this gracious Saviour was "deſpiſed and rejected of men?" when they obſerved ſo many turn a deaf ear to the moſt importunate calls of the goſpel? when they found them cavilling themſelves out of eternal happineſs, and advancing their own blinded and bewildered reaſon, in contempt of the infinite wiſdom of God? What muſt thoſe holy angels, who are filled with gratitude for creating goodneſs, think of thoſe heirs of hell, who pour contempt upon redeeming love? I cannot touch upon every thing that riſes here to our view, but I am perſuaded that the adminiſtration of the covenant of grace is as full of myſtery to the celeſtial ſpirits, as any part of the plan. Inſtead of every ſinner humbly imploring reconciliation with an offended God, our Redeemer, as a Sovereign Lord, as the Prince of Peace, firſt conquers thoſe as enemies, whom he afterwards cheriſhes as friends. He is endued with all power for this great work; and the pſalmiſt gives a beautiful deſcription of its influence and effect, Pſal. xlv. 3. 4. 5. "Gird thy ſword upon thy thigh, O moſt mighty! with thy glory and thy majeſty: and in thy majeſty ride proſperouſly, becauſe of truth, and meekneſs, and righteouſneſs; and thy right hand ſhall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are ſharp in the heart, of the king's enemies, whereby the people

fall under thee." He hath ſent forth his Holy Spirit as an almighty agent, to reconcile ſinners unto God. Is there not alſo a depth of divine ſovereignty to be ſeen in the choice of the veſſels of mercy? The apoſtle Paul in the midſt of the fury of perſecuting zeal, Mary Magdalen from the midſt of the flames of unclean luſt, Zaccheus from the heart-hardening crimes of covetouſneſs and oppreſſion, and many others of the chief of ſinners, have been made the trophies of divine grace, and may ſay in the words of their great example the apoſtle Paul, 1 Tim. i. 15. "This is a faithful ſaying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Chriſt Jeſus came into the world to ſave ſinners, of whom I am chief."

It deſerves alſo particular notice, that faith itſelf is ſaid to be the operation and the gift of God: Eph. ii. 8. "For by grace are ye ſaved, through faith; and that not of yourſelves: it is the gift of God." And indeed the change in general which conſtitutes the new nature, is conſidered as a birth or creation from above: John, i. 13. "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the fleſh, nor of the will of man, but of God." It appears plainly, from many expreſs declarations of ſcripture, from the power neceſſary to overcome their obſtinacy, and from the ſeat of the diſeaſe itſelf, which lies in the will, that ſinners, while they continue ſo, inſtead of deſiring, reſiſt their recovery. What a ſubject of contemplation preſents itſelf to the angels here! What an unknown view is given them of the infinite evil and malignity of ſin! What a humbling ſenſe of created weakneſs! What a leſſon of cau-

tion for their after conduct! It hath been conjectured, not without apparent reason, and some countenance from scripture, that the great purpose which the human system is intended to serve in the universal kingdom of God, is to be an everlasting monument, that a rational creature, who has once departed from its innocence, and obedience to its Creator, never can again return to the same state, but by his own almighty power and sovereign grace. Upon the whole, from this faint view of the plan of redemption, as lying open to the attention of principalities and powers, we may say with the apostle Paul, Rom. ii. 33. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past finding out!"

I PROCEED now to conclude the subject, by some practical improvement of what has been said. And,

1. What you have heard will contribute, I hope, by the divine blessing, to shew the guilt of those who despise the gospel, and serve to remove the offence of the cross. It required no small measure of fortitude in the apostle Paul, to declare that he was not "ashamed of the cross of Christ," which at its first publication was "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness." The doctrine of the cross in its simplicity and purity, has been matter of offence in every succeeding age, to men of proud and worldly minds. God knows, there are not wanting many at this time, who treat the doctrine of the cross, and salvation by grace,

with as much contempt and insolence as they dare. Nor is it at all impossible, that there may be some among you who are infected with these poisonous and destructive principles. Be persuaded, O deluded soul! that "the weakness of God is stronger than man," and "that the wisdom of man is foolishness with God." This glorious and gracious plan hath the approbation and admiration of angels, though it hath the contempt of sinners. It astonished the angels, therefore no wonder though it should astonish us. You will perhaps say, It is indeed astonishing above measure; it teaches me to believe an *incarnate God*, a *suffering Saviour*, the *innocent punished*, and the *guilty forgiven*. It is attended with so many surprising circumstances, that I cannot help saying, How can these things be? But as Sampson said in his riddle, "out of the eater came forth meat, out of the strong came forth sweetness;" so out of the suggestions of your corrupt minds, I would derive some evidence of the truth. A cunningly devised fable would be dressed by the deceiver in a manner suited to the human taste; but this doctrine hath not upon it any of the marks of human wisdom. I do not think, if it had not been revealed, that it could have entered into any human mind; and therefore we may justly say, "Salvation belongeth unto God." It is because he is God, and not man, that we, the children of men, "are not consumed."

2. You may learn from what has been said, the encouragement that is given to sinners to return to God through Christ. The very circumstances that are most astonishing and admirable in this great dis-

penſation, are the undeſerved love and unexpected condeſcenſion of God to guilty and miſerable ſinners. I know that the inward and effectual call can only be given by the Holy Ghoſt; but I know alſo, that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Therefore, in expectation of the bleſſing of him who "hath the hearts of all men in his hand, and turneth them howſoever he will," I proclaim in the hearing of every ſinner within theſe walls, "that God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him might not periſh, but might have everlaſting life." I repeat the univerſal call, that "him that cometh to him, he will in no wiſe caſt out." Are there not many in this houſe under the power of ſin, and the curſe of a broken law? Nay, who is there that is not condemned by theſe important words, which you will find Gal. iii. 10. "Curſed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written tn the book of the law to do them." This ſentence ſtands uncancelled againſt all who are not reconciled to God by faith in Chriſt Jeſus. Is the application difficult? Ye ſlaves of ſin, drunkards, ſwearers, profane and laſcivious jeſters, envious and malicious ſlanderers, retainers of unjuſt gain, and all without exception who are lovers of pleaſure more than lovers of God, ye ſhall be ſlain all of you; "as a bowing wall ſhall ye be, and as a tottering fence." Remember the miſery of thoſe who die in an unconverted ſtate: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Who can abide with devouring fire? Who can dwell with everlaſting burnings?" Admire the

infinite grace of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and admire the infinite wisdom of God that hath laid help for you upon one who is "mighty to save." May I not say, that, on this solemn occasion, your Saviour speaks to you, not only in his word, but from his cross? See the justice of God in the cross of Christ, and thence learn the evil of sin. See the power and wrath of God in the cross of Christ, and tremble at your own state. See the matchless love of God in the cross of Christ, and be persuaded to return to him with weeping, with supplication, and with mourning Let the eye of faith be pointed at the dying Saviour, and say unto him, "O Almighty Sufferer, look down, look down from thy triumphant infamy, pity and pierce this hard heart with a sense of guilt and misery. Thou hast said, that when thou shouldst be lifted up from the earth, thou wouldst draw all men unto thee: let this promise be fulfilled to my experience. *Draw me, we will run after thee.* Lord, take away my complicated guilt; Lord, renew and pacify my unsanctified affections; form me for thyself, that I may serve thee here, and afterwards see thee as thou art!"

3. From what hath been said upon this subject, you may examine your title to partake of the holy ordinance of the Lord's supper; or, in other words, your right to the favour of God, and to eternal life. No disposition more suitable, none more necessary at a communion-table, than a grateful and admiring sense of redeeming love. Not only the profane blasphemer, or the scornful despiser, is unfit to sit down at this feast, but the self-righteous formal-

iſt who never knew himſelf undone. It is true indeed, that when angels themſelves are put to a ſtand, all our thoughts muſt ſoon be loſt and ſwallowed up. But, my brethren, do you deſire to look into it? do you feel a ſenſible pleaſure and delight in this ſacred employment? do you, in ſome meaſure, ſee the glory of divine grace, though you are not able to meaſure its dimenſions? There is no ſubject ſo obſcure and unintelligible to thoſe who are ſtrangers to the power of religion, as the myſtery of redeeming love; no ſubject ſo odious and diſtaſteful to thoſe whoſe minds are formed upon the maxims of the world, as the doctrine of ſalvation by grace. Chriſt upon a croſs, Chriſt upon a throne, Chriſt the believer's rock and refuge, the ſource of his ſtrength, and the ſource of his comfort, they are neither able to reliſh nor comprehend. All the warm expreſſions of gratitude and attachment, which are unſpeakably ſweet and raviſhing to a ſerious ſoul, appear to them in the light of enthuſiaſm and viſionary folly. But as many as it hath pleaſed God to bleſs with an inward and perſonal conviction of their loſt ſtate by nature, will ſee the greateſt beauty in this plan of ſalvation, and will rather rejoice than ſhrink, at ſharing with their Redeemer himſelf the contempt of the world. They will ſay, with the apoſtle Paul, Gal. vi. 14. "God forbid that I ſhould glory, ſave in the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt." There is a beautiful oppoſition ſtated by the ſame apoſtle, between a believer's underſtanding the love of Chriſt, and yet being unable to ſearch it to the bottom, in the following paſſage, Eph. iii. 17. 18. 19.

"That Chriſt may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all ſaints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Chriſt, which paſſeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulneſs of God."

4. In the *laſt* place, From what has been ſaid, learn what is your moſt proper employment at the Lord's table. Adore and contemplate the riches of redeeming grace, that great theme which "the angels deſire to look into." Think, with humble amazement, on the boundleſs mercy of God, which reached even to you, and with the higheſt thankfulneſs on the honour to which you are admitted, of receiving the ſenſible pledges of his love. Dwell on this impenetrable myſtery of "Immanuel God with us—God manifeſted in the fleſh." Think on this awful proof of divine juſtice and holineſs, the wrath of God poured out upon his own Son. Think on the perfection of that atonement which is made for the ſins of the world. Rejoice in the fulneſs of that Saviour who is now made "head over all things to the church;" and draw, by faith, from his fulneſs, every neceſſary ſupply to yourſelves: and as you are now to commemorate his death, with a view to his ſecond coming, think on that "day of ſalvation," when he ſhall come "to be glorified in his ſaints, and admired in all them that believe;" when you ſhall enter in triumph into the holieſt of all, where no doubt the myſtery of redemption ſhall be more fully diſcovered; when ſaints and angels ſhall jointly ſing that new ſong,

Rev. v. 12. "Worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain, to receive power, and riches, and wiſdom, and ſtrength, and honour, and glory, and bleſſing;" when the whole plan of divine grace ſhall be completed and cloſed, and the mediatorial kingdom itſelf brought to a period; for "then cometh the end, when he ſhall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father;" when confirmed angels and redeemed ſinners, when the whole hoſt of heaven, ſhall unite in one acclamation, "Hallelujah: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

SERMON VIII.

GLORYING IN THE CROSS.

GALATIANS vi. 14.

But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

ACTION SERMON.

MY brethren, we are this day met to keep up the remembrance of our Redeemer's sufferings and death in our room. We are to commemorate an event the most important, the most interesting, and the most astonishing, that creation ever beheld. We are to contemplate a subject the most wonderful and mysterious that ever was offered to the mind of man—the *incarnation* of the *Son of God*, the *King of kings* found in the form of a *servant*, and the *Prince of life* expiring on an *accursed tree*. What is this but the union of things the most opposite and seemingly inconsistent that can possibly be conceived? the union of the most distant extremes of strength and weakness, glory and baseness, honour and shame?

In a ſort of correſpondence and analogy to this great ſubject itſelf, nothing can be more oppoſite than the ſentiments formed by believers and unbelievers with regard to it. To the one, it hath a dignity and majeſty unſpeakably amiable; to the other, it hath a meanneſs and baſeneſs that is ſhameful and contemptible. The apoſtle Paul often takes notice of this, that it was "to the Jews a ſtumbling-block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs;" and he often diſcovers his own inviolable attachment to his Saviour, by an open profeſſion of eſteem for thoſe circumſtances in his character and appearance which a blinded world were moſt apt to treat with deriſion and ſcorn. This is particularly the caſe in the text, *But God forbid that I ſhould glory ſave in the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

By the croſs of Chriſt, in the New Teſtament, we are ſometimes to underſtand the ſufferings of believers for Chriſt's ſake; but more commonly, and I think evidently in this place, it ſignifies his humiliation in general, and particularly his crucifixion, to which circumſtance our attention is directed, becauſe it was the moſt baſe and ignominious of the whole. In this the apoſtle ſays he would glory: nay, he expreſſes his abhorrence at the thought of glorying in any thing elſe: *God forbid that I ſhould glory ſave in the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* Nothing can be more ſuited to the employment of this day, and nothing more proper to diſtinguiſh between the friends and the enemies of Chriſt, than this, when carefully attended to; for the one will undoubtedly *glory*, and the other will as certainly *be aſhamed* of the croſs.

In discoursing further on this subject, what I propose, through divine assistance, is,

I. To explain the import of the apostle's glorying only in the Saviour's cross.

II. To show what good reason every real Christian hath to glory in it. And,

III. To make some practical application of the subject.

I. In the *first* place, then, let us explain the import of the apostle's glorying only in the Saviour's cross. What is this object in which the apostle says he would glory? Very wonderful indeed. It is, that Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Mary, was subjected to a long life of sorrow, reproach, and contempt; that towards the close of it, he was arrested, accused, condemned as a malefactor; and after innumerable and unspeakable indignities, was at last nailed to a cross, an engine of torture of the most cruel and painful kind, and so shameful, that it was a manner of punishment appropriated to the most detested criminals of the basest rank. What is there here to glory in? and what does the apostle mean by this expression? It means,

1. That he had a high esteem of it, as an event of the greatest moment, and an object worthy of the highest regard. We do not glory in common things, but in things of peculiar dignity and worth. It was not then in his view merely what it seemed. He did not consider it, surely, as the execution of a criminal; but said, with the centurion on Mount Calvary, "Truly, this was a righteous man;" truly, this was "the Son of God." He consider-

ed it as the effect of the infinite love of God, who sent his only-begotten Son to die for our sins. He considered it as an infinite price paid for the pardon of our offences, as the only way of deliverance from guilt, as the sure and certain pledge of peace to an awakened conscience. In this view, how does it rise in his esteem? While others are disposed to scorn, pitying their madness, he is constrained to worship and adore. Think of it, Christians, how different were the sentiments of his insulting enemies and his mourning disciples, when he hung upon the cross! The one consider him as a guilty sufferer, the other as a loving Saviour. The hearts of the one were boiling with hatred, or filled with contempt; the hearts of the other were swallowed up in admiration, or melted with love.

2. The apostle's glorying in the cross, implied his having a strong though humble confidence of his own relation to and interest in it. I think it is impossible to separate this from our idea of the apostle's meaning. We do not glory or boast of any thing in which we have no concern. A man of great genius, or uncommon worth, I may admire and honour, merely for the eminent qualities of which he is possessed, and I may do him all justice by commendation; but I am never disposed to glory in him, nor have I any title to do it, unless he is somehow related to me: but if I add, that he is my child, or he is my brother, I may be truly said to glory in him, or to boast of him, because the honour that is given to him is in some measure reflected upon myself. Again, I may speak of the riches and magnificence of some great city; but

I am then only ſaid to glory in it, if I add any circumſtance of relation; as that it is the place of my nativity, or the place of my reſidence, or the place where I have property and intereſt. When, therefore, the apoſtle ſays, "God forbid that I ſhould glory, ſave in the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt," it certainly implies a humble perſuaſion of his own intereſt in it, and his happineſs to flow from it. This indeed naturally ariſes from a real and ſpiritual diſcovery of its proper glory. None can ſee the tranſcendent beauty of this object, till they have ſeen their own guilt and miſery in the ſight of a holy God. And no ſooner do they diſcover the excellence of this atonement, its perfect ſufficiency for all, and the unreſtrained offer to all, than they fly to it as their ſecurity, and reſt on it as the ground of their hope. The word here tranſlated *glorying*, ſignifies at the ſame time *exulting*, or *rejoicing*; and therefore to glory in the croſs, is the ſame thing as to rejoice in the Saviour. The truth is, it is but ſeldom that this apoſtle mentions the death of Chriſt without ſome appropriating expreſſion: Phil. iii. 8. "Yea, doubtleſs, and I count all things but loſs, for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus my Lord: for whom I have ſuffered the loſs of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Chriſt." Gal. ii. 20. "I am crucified with Chriſt: nevertheleſs I live; yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the fleſh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himſelf for me."

3. To complete the idea of the apoſtle's glorying

in the croſs, it implies ſuch a ſenſe of its comparative worth, as prompts him to a public and open profeſſion of eſteem, with a ſovereign contempt of the judgement or conduct of others who ſet themſelves in oppoſition to it. Glorying always ſignifies the declaration of our mind to others; and is not ill illuſtrated by that expreſſion of the apoſtle Paul, in writing to the Romans, chap. i. 16. "For I am not aſhamed of the goſpel of Chriſt: for it is the power of God unto ſalvation, to every one that believeth, to the Jew firſt, and alſo to the Greek." The oppoſition between the ſentiments of others and his own, he often mentions; as 1 Cor. i. 18. "For the preaching of the croſs is to them that periſh, foooliſhneſs: but unto us which are ſaved, it is the power of God." And ver. 23. "But we preach Chriſt crucified, unto the Jews a ſtumbling-block, and unto the Greeks fooliſhneſs; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Chriſt the power of God, and the wiſdom of God." When he glories in the croſs, therefore, it implies an open and reſolute adherence to this deſpiſed cauſe. This meaning is particularly carried in the word *croſs*. It had been leſs wonder if he had ſaid, he gloried in our Saviour's divine power exerted before his crucifixion, or that he gloried in his triumphant reſurrection, and exaltation to the right hand of God after it; but, inſtead of this, he ſays he gloried in his *croſs*, in his very abaſement, in what was moſt vile and contemptible.

A late very eminent writer and champion for the croſs, in a ſermon on the ſame ſubject, makes a re-

mark to the following purpose: ' * That through the veneration of many ages, and the disuse of that punishment among us in the execution of malefactors, the word *cross* does not carry so base an idea to our minds; but that in the ear of a Galatian, it sounded as if the apostle had said, he gloried in a gallows, a gibbet, or a halter.' And in a note upon this passage of the sermon, when published, he expresses himself thus: ' Some persons, I am informed, were disgusted at these words, *halter*, *gallows*, *gibbet*, they are so horribly contemptible: to whom I would reply, That the cross, in point of ignominy, implied all this; and in point of torture, much more. Unless the English reader forms to himself some such image as this, he will never be able to apprehend the scandalous nature and shocking circumstances of his divine Master's death. The words, I must confess, were diversified, and the sentiment reiterated, on purpose to affect the mind with this astonishing truth. Neither can I prevail with myself to expunge the expressions, unless I could substitute others of a more ignominious and execrable import in their room. Only I would beg the serious reader to spend a moment in the following reflection: Is it so, that a polite and delicate ear can hardly endure so much as the sound of the words? How amazing then was the condescension, how charming and adorable the goodness of God's illustrious Son, to bear all that is signified by these intolerably vile terms, bear it willingly, bear it chearfully, for us men, and our salvation!'

* Mr Harvey.

Before concluding this head, it will be proper to obſerve, in what it was the apoſtle did not glory. There is plainly a tacit oppoſition in the form of his expreſſion, to ſome things in which others were apt to glory, and he as heartily deſpiſed: *God forbid that I ſhould glory ſave in the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* He ſays in general, Phil. iii. 7. "But what things were gain to me, thoſe I counted loſs for Chriſt." We find elſewhere, in his writings, expreſs mention of thoſe particulars which he renounced as any ſubject of boaſting. 1. His learning as a ſcholar; 2. His privileges as a Jew; 3. Even his zeal and activity as a miniſter of Chriſt. Let us conſider each of theſe by itſelf.

1. He would not glory in his learning as a ſcholar. The apoſtle Paul had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and ſeems to have been well accompliſhed in every branch of human ſcience. Yet he ſpeaks of it with great neglect, or rather with a noble diſdain, when compared with the doctrine of the croſs: 1 Cor. i. 17. "For Chriſt ſent me not to baptiſe, but to preach the goſpel: not with wiſdom of words, leſt the croſs of Chriſt ſhould be made of none effect." And again, ver. 19. 20. "For it is written, I will deſtroy the wiſdom of the wiſe, and will bring to nothing the underſtanding of the prudent. Where is the wiſe? where is the ſcribe? where is the diſputer of this world? hath not God made fooliſh the wiſdom of this world?" It may perhaps be aſked, What is the meaning of this renunciation of human learning and wiſdom? Is there any real oppoſition between learning and the croſs? Would not the legitimate uſe of human

wiſdom lead us to embrace it? To this I anſwer, that it ſeems to imply theſe three things.

(1.) An admiration of the divine glory in that which had not on it any of the marks of human wiſdom: in conſequence of this, a ſtedfaſt adherence to the doctrine of the croſs, though thoſe who were wiſe in their own conceit might be tempted to deſpiſe it, and to deſpiſe him for its ſake. This great ſcholar, then, was not unwilling to ſuffer the deriſion and contempt of other ſcholars for his glorying in the croſs.

(2.) It implied ſuch a ſuperlative admiration of this glorious and intereſting object, that all the knowledge he poſſeſſed, and the honour he could otherwiſe acquire, ſeemed to him unworthy of regard: his attention was wholly fixed upon, and his affections wholly engroſſed by, his Redeemer's croſs.

(3.) It implied, that though he certainly ought, and certainly did uſe the noble parts and accompliſhments of which he was poſſeſſed, with zeal in his Maſter's cauſe; yet he did it with that humility and ſelf-denial, with the noble contempt of vain embelliſhments, which ſhowed he was not building a monument to himſelf, but ſeeking the honour of his Saviour. The doctrine of the croſs ſhould be treated in a manner ſomehow correſpondent to it; not with a learned and oſtentatious ſelf-ſufficiency, but with a meek and truly evangelical ſelf-denial.

Miſtake me not, my brethren: I am not ſpeaking againſt learning in itſelf; it is a precious gift of God, and may be happily improved in the ſervice of the goſpel: but I will venture to ſay, in the ſpi-

rit of the apoſtle Paul's writings in general, and of this paſſage in particular, Accurſed be all that learning which ſets itſelf in oppoſition to the croſs of Chriſt! Accurſed be all that learning which diſguiſes or is aſhamed of the croſs of Chriſt! Accurſed be all that learning which fills the room that is due to the croſs of Chriſt! and once more, Accurſed be all that learning which is not made ſubſervient to the honour and glory of the croſs of Chriſt!

Well, then, the learned and eloquent apoſtle renounced the wiſdom of words; and how do we apply this in general? By a ſmall comparative eſteem of all natural advantages; and by thinking it, in the heart, a greater honour and a higher privilege to ſit down at Chriſt's table, and to find acceptance with him, than to poſſeſs beauty, wiſdom, learning, riches, and honours, in the higheſt poſſible perfection: and may God grant, that every one in this aſſembly may be able to ſay, in ſincerity, that in what things he thinks he excels, theſe he is willing to "count loſs for Chriſt!"

2. The apoſtle would not glory in his privileges as a Jew. This we find him affirming in many places of his writings: Phil. iii. 4. "Though I might alſo have confidence in the fleſh. If any other man think that he hath whereof he might truſt in the fleſh, I more: Circumciſed the eighth day, of the ſtock of Iſrael, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Phariſee; concerning zeal, perſecuting the church; touching the righteouſneſs which is in the law, blameleſs." Towards the latter end of the

Jewiſh common-wealth, there was a very prevailing and groſs miſtake among them, to look upon their external privileges as entitling them to the favour of God, and making a difference between them and others. We have reaſon to be ſenſible, that much of the ſame diſpoſition is ready to adhere to men in every age. But one great deſign of the goſpel is, to level the pride of man, to throw down all diſtinction in point of merit before God, and to ſhew that the power of the Redeemer is equally neceſſary to, and equally ſufficient for, all without exception: Rom. iii. 22. "Even the righteouſneſs of God which is by faith of Jeſus Chriſt unto all, and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference." Rom. x. 12. "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the ſame Lord over all, is rich unto all that call upon him." Col. iii. 11. "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumciſion nor uncircumciſion, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free: but Chriſt is all and in all."

3. The apoſtle did not glory in his perſonal character, nor even in his zeal and activity as a miniſter of Chriſt. This appears through the whole of his writings, where he is at particular pains to deſtroy every foundation of boaſting or glorying in ourſelves: Rom. iii. 24.—28. "Being juſtified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jeſus Chriſt: whom God hath ſet forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteouſneſs for the remiſſion of ſins that are paſt, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I ſay, at this time his righteouſneſs: that he might be

juſt, and the juſtifier of him which believeth in Jeſus. Where is boaſting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude, that a man is juſtified by faith, without the deeds of the law." Nay, we find that all his public ſervices he conſiders as quite unfit ſubjects for boaſting, even when he is obliged to mention them for his own vindication: 1 Cor. xv. 9. 10. "For I am the leaſt of the apoſtles, that am not meet to be called an apoſtle, becauſe I perſecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was beſtowed upon me, was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

I am perſuaded that thoſe who, from really Chriſtian principles, ſerve God in their generation with the greateſt zeal, will be moſt ready to renounce all plea to merit upon that account. I have read with pleaſure the following account of the temper expreſſed by John Knox, that eminent inſtrument in the reformation, when he was drawing near to his diſſolution. Some perſon preſent mentioned to him, what comfort he might now have in his extraordinary labour and great uſefulneſs in the church: to whom he anſwered, "Forbear to puff up the fleſh with vanity, to which it is of itſelf ſufficiently prone. The port I would be in at, is that of the free grace of God, through the merits of my bleſſed Saviour." The truth is, theſe are but the ſentiments which ſhall not only go with us to death, but continue with us to eternity. A deep ſenſe of redeeming love, and grateful celebration of the Redeemer's

glory, is not only the language of the church on earth, but the delightful worſhip of the church triumphant in heaven: Rev. v. 11. 12. 13. "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beaſts, and the elders, and the number of them was ten thouſand times ten thouſand, and thouſands of thouſands; ſaying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain, to receive power, and riches, and wiſdom, and ſtrength, and honour, and glory, and bleſſing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and ſuch as are in the ſea, and all that are in them, heard I ſaying, Bleſſing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that ſitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

II. We proceed now to the *ſecond* general head of diſcourſe, viz. To conſider what reaſon every real Chriſtian hath to glory in the croſs. This indeed opens to us a ſubject of the moſt amazing compaſs and extent. Though there is nothing here but what is vile and contemptible to an unbelieving worldly mind; by the eye of faith, every thing that is wonderful, amiable, and valuable, is diſcovered in the higheſt perfection. I cannot particularly enumerate every ſubject of glorying in the croſs; and therefore ſhall juſt point out to you the three following ſubjects of meditation, which, though they often run into one another, may be conſidered in diſtinct and ſeparate lights. 1. The glory of divine perfection ſhines in it in the brighteſt manner. 2. The riches of divine grace are mani-

feſted in it to the moſt aſtoniſhing degree. 3. The ſanctifying efficacy of it is ſo tranſcendently ſuperior to that of any other mean, as ſhows it to have been the appointment of infinite wiſdom.

1. The glory of divine perfection ſhines in it in the brighteſt manner. Would we directly contemplate the glory of the inviſible God, as it ſhines in his works and ways? let us look upon the croſs. It hath been ſometimes, and very juſtly, ſaid of the works of God, that they have uſually in them ſomething much more wonderful and excellent than appears at firſt view. It hath alſo been further obſerved, that, in this reſpect, there is a complete contraſt and oppoſition between the works of the Creator and thoſe of the creature. Every thing that flows from God, the more ſtrictly we examine it, and the more perfectly we know it, the more we ſhall admire it; but every work of the creature, the more perfectly it is known, the more its inherent weakneſs always appears. This diſcovers itſelf even in comparing the produce of the field with the effects of human art. Naturaliſts obſerve, that the fineſt and moſt admirable human manufactures, when ſeen, as by a finer ſenſe, with the aſſiſtance of a microſcope, appears quite coarſe and irregular; but that if you look at a pile of graſs, or any thing natural, with the ſame aſſiſtance, you will ſee ſtill more exquiſite and delicate ſtrokes of the almighty operator.

If this is the caſe even in the material productions of natural power, how much more muſt it be ſo in the unſearchable myſteries of God's ſpiritual kingdom! In none will it hold more than in this

chief of the works of God, this glorious though despised object, the cross of Christ. Here indeed the glory of God appears in all its lustre. It appears in so strong and so various lights, that the highest angels are employed, delighted, and lost in the contemplation of it: 1 Pet. i. 12. "Which things the angels desire to look into." Eph. iii. 10. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." O what a display of power in the union of God and man! What an almighty arm was required to make these things meet, which were infinitely distant! The Creator of the ends of the earth born of a woman! the Self-existent become a feeble infant! the Lord of glory covered with shame! the Judge of all condemned to suffer! the Author of life giving up the ghost!

What unsearchable wisdom appears in finding a victim able to bear almighty vengeance! in finding a way by which sin might be at once punished and pardoned, justice fully satisfied, even where mercy is extended! Little wonder indeed that the angels desire to look into this mystery. They had tasted the fruits of divine benignity in the happiness of innocent creatures; they had seen the glory of divine justice in the perdition of the rebel-angels; but the cross of Christ was the first thing that discovered to them the glory of divine mercy, in pardoning the chief of sinners, without in the least obscuring the brightness either of justice or holiness, nay, to the illustration of both. In the cross of Christ, there is a more awful and penetrating view of the

juſtice and holineſs of God, than could have been given by the irreparable deſtruction of the whole race of Adam. And at the ſame time, his not "ſparing his own Son, but "delivering him up for us all," is a more aſtoniſhing effect of love, than pardon without ſatisfaction could have been, had that been a thing in itſelf poſſible. There is no end or meaſure to our views of this ſubject; but I hope many of you will now ſay, with the apoſtle Paul, what I dare ſay he has not yet done repeating in heaven, Rom. xi. 33. "O the depth of the riches both of the wiſdom and knowledge of God! how unſearchable are his judgements, and his ways paſt finding out!"

2. The riches of divine grace are manifeſted in the croſs of Chriſt to the moſt aſtoniſhing degree. It is not merely a wonderful work of God, which all his intelligent creatures may behold with admiration; but it is a deſign in which we ourſelves have an immediate and an infinite concern: For, If. liii. 5. "He was wounded for our tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for our iniquities: the chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him, and with his ſtripes we are healed." O what an amazing diſplay of unmerited love! Every divine perfection indeed appears in it very clearly, but chiefly love. The tender mercy of our God predominates, actuates, and reigns through the whole. Chriſt's undertaking, in general, is the fruit and evidence of the everlaſting love of God: John, iii. 16. "For God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life." Salvation, in

the whole of its purchaſe and effects, was the fruit and expreſſion of the infinite love of Chriſt: Rev. i. 5. 6. "Unto him that loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and prieſts unto God, and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." The believing ſoul is never more at a loſs than when attempting to confeſs its obligations to redeeming love. The human mind never feels its weakneſs more than when it attempts to conceive, or to illuſtrate, this truly incomprehenſible ſubject.

The grace of redemption may be conſidered and illuſtrated in a great variety of lights: From the greatneſs of the miſery from which we are delivered; for "we are ſaved from wrath through him:" From the greatneſs of the happineſs to which we are entitled; for we are made "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Chriſt:" From the guilt and unworthineſs of the objects of this love; for it was "when we were enemies" that "we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." But beſides theſe conſiderations, there is more than enough of divine mercy to excite our wonder in the croſs of Chriſt, the price paid for our redemption.

Great ſufferings uſually melt the heart to ſympathy and tenderneſs, though we have no immediate concern in them at all: but how much more muſt every ſource of tenderneſs be opened, when we conſider the ſufferer as an innocent perſon, and as ſuffering in our room! Remember the perſon, remember the nature, remember the greatneſs, remember the end, of his ſuffering; the eternal Son of God, the great Immanuel, covered with ſhame,

dragged to an unrighteous tribunal, not to abide the decrees of juſtice, but to bear the effects of blinded rage! See him, O ſhocking ſight! blindfolded, buffeted, and ſpit upon, ſeverely ſcourged, crowned with thorns, arrayed in purple, adored in deriſion! See him nailed to the croſs! O ſhameful, O tormenting, O moſt accurſed manner of death! Is it poſſible to conceive the grace of this amazing humiliation, this infinite condeſcenſion? I would even call it incredible condeſcenſion, but that happily it carries upon it this great truth, That God's ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts. Apply it therefore, O ſinner! and ſee how it magnifies the love of God. Was all this abaſement, all this ſhame, all this ſuffering, for me? and ſhall I not glory in the croſs? Shall I even glory in any thing but the croſs? As it magnifies the divine power, as it magnifies the divine mercy, ſo it magnifies the ſinner. Is it any leſs to our honour than to his ſhame? We can never appear ſo valuable as when our ſalvation is purchaſed by our Saviour's dying groans.

3. In the *laſt* place, The real Chriſtian has reaſon to glory in the croſs, for its efficacy as a principle of ſanctification. This is plainly implied in the clauſe immediately following the text: for "by it the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." The apoſtle certainly has this alſo in view, when he celebrates the doctrine of the croſs as the wiſdom and the power of God unto ſalvation. And indeed, to every believer, the croſs, conſidered only as the truth, and as operating by faith on the underſtanding and heart, is ſuch an argument to

duty, as there is not another in the whole compaſs of human knowledge that may once be compared to it. Does any thing ſet in ſo ſtrong a light the obligation of God's moſt holy law? Does any thing ſet in ſo ſtrong a light the infinite evil of ſin? the infinite holineſs of God? the infinite danger of ſin? Muſt not the reflection of every believer be, "Who can ſtand before this holy Lord God? If ſuch things be done in the green tree, what ſhall be done in the dry?"

But what is the great ſource, evidence, ſum, and perfection of ſanctification? Is it not the love of God? And how ſhall this be produced, how ſhall it be preſerved and improved, in ſo effectual a manner, as by believing views of the croſs of Chriſt, the moſt tender and coſtly expreſſion of his love to us? 1 John, iv. 19. "We love him, becauſe he firſt loved us." How does this fill the Chriſtian with indignation againſt ſin, which he muſt conſider as "crucifying him to himſelf afreſh!" &c. How does it endear to him his Saviour's commands! how does it inſpire him with zeal in doing his will, and fortitude in ſuffering for his cauſe! Will any thing ſo effectually determine us to love our fellow-creatures, as his command and example? Will any thing ſo effectually perſuade us to diſcharge the moſt important duties to others, I mean, ſeeking their eternal welfare, as the value of a precious ſoul eſtimated by the croſs? Will any thing ſo effectually diſpoſe us to the moſt difficult duties to others, I mean, meekneſs, patience, and forgiveneſs, as the great debt cancelled to us by his ſufferings on the croſs? Is it poſſible

that his own words, in that awful ſeaſon, can ever be forgotten, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do?" I cannot at preſent enlarge further on theſe views; but well might the apoſtle, and well may every Chriſtian, glory in his Maſter's croſs, for the unſpeakable benefit he receives from it: For, 1 Cor. i. 30. "of him are ye in Chriſt Jeſus, who of God is made unto us wiſdom, and righteouſneſs, and ſanctification, and redemption."

I PROCEED now to make ſome practical application of what hath been ſaid. And,

1. From what hath been ſaid, you may learn what is the great and leading doctrine of the goſpel, the ſum and ſubſtance of the truth as it is in Jeſus, viz. the doctrine of the croſs, or Chriſt ſuffering the wrath of God, to redeem us from hell. This was the great deſign formed in the councils of peace, early intimated in the firſt promiſe, gradually unfolded in after ages, and completely manifeſted in the fulneſs of time. The Saviour was the ſubject of the promiſes, the hope of the ancient patriarchs, the ſubſtance of the New-Teſtament diſpenſation, and the burden of the everlaſting goſpel. He ſaith of himſelf, Rev. i. 8. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, ſaith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." On his glorious character, and precious blood, the inſpired apoſtles delighted to dwell. Did they then miſtake their meſſage? did they miſlead their hearers? No; it was, and it ſhall

ever remain, an unchangeable truth, what the apoſtle declares, 1 Cor. iii. 11. "For other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jeſus Chriſt."

On this foundation, every thing that is agreeable to the will of God, in doctrine or practice, muſt be built. Every other part of the word of God derives light and beauty from the croſs; every other part of the word of God derives force and meaning from the croſs; every other part of the word of God derives life and efficacy from the croſs. Let us therefore remember its influence and value, and never loſe view of it. Let us deſpiſe the ignorant reproaches of thoſe who ſlander it as unfavourable to moral virtue. I dare not ſay, indeed, that it is very favourable to an oſtentatious parade of human merit; but I am ſure it is the only way of producing ſelf-denied obedience to the will of God.

2. From what hath been ſaid, you may ſee the guilt and danger of the enemies of the croſs, and at the ſame time may learn who they are who deſerve this character. They may be divided into two diſtinct claſſes: (1.) Thoſe who are enemies in principle to the croſs, who have no ſenſe of their own unworthineſs, of the evil of ſin, or the neceſſity of an atonement. Such may ſometimes retain the name of Chriſtians, and contend that they ought to retain it, while they oppoſe, with the utmoſt virulence and malice, its moſt important and fundamental truth. I cannot think, without horror, on the guilt and ingratitude of all ſuch perſons, and the fearful puniſhment which they ſhall meet with at laſt, when this deſpiſed Saviour "ſhall come in the

clouds, and every eye ſhall ſee him." (2.) They are alſo enemies to this truth, who are governed in temper and practice by a ſpirit directly oppoſite to that of the croſs. The ſhame and reproach which the croſs implied are not ſufficiently attended to, nor the humility and ſelf-denial neceſſary to all thoſe who would be the followers of a crucified Maſter? Are there not many who will have no religion but what will be pliable, and accommodate itſelf to the maxims of the world? Loaded with prudence, they are unwilling to break meaſures, either with the good or the bad. Dazzled with human pomp, they deſpiſe every thing in religion, but what, either in ſubſtance or circumſtances, is grateful to human pride. Faſhionable practices, however dangerous or vicious, they have not courage to oppoſe. It were well, if they would conſider the ancient form of confeſſion at baptiſm. Do you renounce the devil, and all his works? I do. Do you renounce the world, its pomps, its pleaſures, and its vanities? I do.—And this was not merely heatheniſh idolatry, and ceremonies of falſe worſhip, but that indulgence of vanity, and that gratification of appetite, in which worldly men, in every age, place their ſupreme delight.

3. What hath been ſaid may ſerve for the ſupport and conſolation of real believers, under the trials to which they are expoſed in the preſent ſtate. It is melancholy to think, how frequently, and how eaſily, we are unhinged by diſtreſs; what diſcontent and impatience we are apt to diſcover under ſuffering. Alas! my brethren, are you not aſhamed of impatience, when you conſider the un-

paralleled ſufferings of your Redeemer in your room? A believing view of the Saviour's croſs, one would think, might ſtop every mouth, and compoſe every murmuring thought. Has he ſuffered ſo much for us? and ſhall we refuſe to ſuffer from him, and for him? His ſufferings ſhould make us patient, as they ſhew us the evil of ſin, and what we have deſerved. Did we really deſerve avenging wrath? and ſhall we dare to complain of fatherly correction? Did he ſuffer with patience, who did no ſin? and ſhall we complain, who are puniſhed leſs than our iniquities deſerve? His ſufferings ſhould teach us patience, becauſe they take away the bitterneſs and malignity of our ſufferings, and turn them from a poiſon to a medicine: he hath exhauſted, if I may ſpeak ſo, the whole wrath of God, and left nothing for us but what is highly ſalutary. And as he hath changed the nature of all the ſufferings of life, he hath taken away the ſting of death, which is the end of all our ſuffering. That blood which ſpeaks peace to the wounded ſpirit, ſhould be a healing balm to the wounded body.

But of all the different kinds of ſuffering, if we pretend to glory in the croſs, we ought to be leaſt afraid of the reproach thrown upon us for adherence to our duty. To glory in the croſs, is indeed to glory in ſhame. The form of expreſſion uſed with regard to Peter and John, Acts, v. 41. is very remarkable. They departed from the preſence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to ſuffer ſhame for his name. It would greatly tend to fortify us againſt this trial, if we would

lay up in our hearts what hath been said on the doctrine of the cross. If it is impossible to avoid it, we must needs sit down composedly under it. And if our attachment to our great Master is what it ought to be, we will chearfully follow him even without the camp, bearing his reproach.

4. In the *last* place, By what hath been said, you may try your title to sit down at the Lord's table, and learn your employment there. This ordinance is a sensible memorial of our Redeemer's cross and passion. It was on the cross that his body was broken, and his blood shed, for you. Are you then to commemorate it? You cannot do so, either in an acceptable or profitable manner, unless you can join the apostle in glorying in it. Have you seen any thing of the excellence and amiableness of this despised object? Nothing so tasteless and insipid to the proud and self-righteous; nothing so delightful and refreshing to the broken in heart. Have you seen any thing of the glory of the true God, in the sufferings of Christ? and can you say with the apostle Paul, Heb. ii. 10. "It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings?" Do you see the glory of infinite mercy in the cross? and are your hearts drawn with "the cords of love to him who loved you, and gave himself for you?" Have you experienced the sanctifying influence of the cross? are your corruptions weakened and mortified by looking upon it? Is it your unfeigned desire, that they may be finally destroyed by it?

To draw to a concluſion of the ſubject: I cannot point out your duty to you in a manner more ſuited to this day's employment, or more proper for your after ſecurity and comfort, than to turn the three reaſons for glorying in the croſs into the form of exhortations.—I beſeech you, my beloved hearers, contemplate the glory of God in the croſs of Chriſt. See him, infinite in wiſdom, infinite in power, infinite in holineſs. You may ſee a faint emblem of his glory in the book of nature; but you can only ſee his tranſcendent majeſty in the book of God. And may "he who at firſt commanded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs, ſhine in your hearts, to give you the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jeſus Chriſt!"—Adore and apply the riches of divine grace. Let the convinced, fearful, trembling ſinner, fly to this atoning blood, reſt his hope upon it, and be ſecure.—And neglect not to uſe the croſs of Chriſt for mortifying your corruptions. Let your views of it now be lively and ſtrong, and carry the ſame impreſſion away, to be your great preſervative from daily temptation. Make no image of the croſs in your houſes; but let the remembrance of it be ever on your hearts. One lively view of this great object will cool the flames of unclean luſt: one lively view of this great object will make the unjuſt man quit his hold: one lively view of this tremendous object will make the angry man drop his weapon: nay, one look of mercy from a dying Saviour will make even the covetous man open his heart. In one word, believing views of the croſs of Chriſt will unite

the Chriſtian more and more to a reconciled God; will make his preſence comfortable, his worſhip delightful, and excite a humble longing for that time when we ſhall ſee him no more through the help of theſe elements, but as he is in himſelf, exalted on his throne, where his worſhip and ſervice are everlaſting.

SERMON IX.

THE WORLD CRUCIFIED BY THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

GALATIANS, vi. 14. laſt clauſe.

—— *By whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world.*

THE character of a ſervant of God is ſometimes deſcribed in ſcripture by particular diſpoſitions or inſtances of obedience, and ſometimes by a general view of the ſpirit that runs through the whole of his temper and carriage. Each of theſe ways has its own advantage and uſe. Each of them is be found in its proper order in the holy ſcriptures, and ſtands there as a proof of their fulneſs and perfection. The whole of this paſſage, but particularly the laſt clauſe, upon which I am now to inſiſt, is of the general kind, and, in the apoſtle's own example, gives us a very comprehenſive view of what ought to be the temper and diſpoſition of every real Chriſtian: *By whom*, that is, by Chriſt crucified, or, "by which," that is to ſay, by the croſs of Chriſt, *the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world.*

This description will serve, if carefully attended to, as a trial and touchstone of sincerity; and, in particular, will serve to distinguish real religion from some of its most deceitful and plausible counterfeits. At the same time, it will furnish the sincere Christian with very important directions for his preservation and improvement, by pointing out the most fatal and dangerous rocks of temptation, which it is his interest to avoid. Having explained the words in my discourse upon the former part of the verse, I now only observe, that the proposition contained in them is, "That the world is crucified to the believer, and he to the world, by the cross of Christ." This naturally resolves itself into two parts, which I propose to consider distinctly, viz.

I. What is the import of a believer's being crucified to the world, and the world to him.

II. What influence the cross of Christ hath in producing this effect. Having done this, I will,

III. Make a practical improvement of the subject.

I. First, then, we are to consider the import of a believer's being crucified to the world, and the world to him. This seems to deserve the greater attention, that through the whole New Testament there is a direct opposition stated between the world and the disciples of Christ: an opposition of character, an opposition of interest, and a continual conflict in consequence of both: John, xv. 18. 19. "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not

of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." In this passage the world seems to be taken chiefly for the men of the world, or its inhabitants. It is, however, taken in a more extensive sense in the two following: 1 John, ii. 15. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John, v. 4. "For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Here, no doubt, it signifies not only men, and our hopes and fears from them, but every thing in the present life that may be the object of carnal affection, of sinful or undutiful attachment.

The expression in the text, *The world is crucified to me*, is figurative; but abundantly plain, and exceedingly strong. It might be considered very extensively, and several things upon it may probably afterwards occur. Let it suffice at present to make two observations. 1. This intimates the sincerity and heartiness of the believer's opposition to the world. It must be remembered, that crucifixion was a death the most painful and disgraceful that could possibly be inflicted. When this image, therefore, is borrowed, and applied to the believer's separation from the world, it implies not only an indifference to it, but the most sovereign contempt of it, from the deepest and strongest conviction of its absolute vanity. Nay, as no persons were crucified but who were hated as well as despised by their judges, to be crucified to the world implies an unfeigned ab-

horrence of its pollution, and a dread of being enſlaved by it.

2. The ſame thing intimates the perpetuity and fixedneſs of the Chriſtian's oppoſition to the world. Thoſe who were crucified were devoted to deſtruction, when they were nailed to the tree: they were not only tormented for a ſeaſon, but fixed there till death concluded the ſcene: ſo I apprehend the apoſtle intended to ſignify, by this expreſſion, his final ſeparation from the world, without the leaſt hope or deſire of ever returning to it.

After taking this ſhort and general view of the import of the expreſſion, it will be neceſſary more diſtinctly and fully to conſider, what is implied in being crucified to the world. This ought to be done with the greater care, that it is an important and difficult duty. To be truly crucified to the world, I am afraid is exceeding rare; and even thoſe who are ſo in ſincerity, upon the whole, are far from being ſo in the degree that they ought to be. The puniſhment of crucifixion is a ſtrong image, in one particular, of the believer's character. Though it was certain death, it was ſlow and lingering: ſo worldlineſs, in many perſons, continues long vigorous, and dies very ſlowly.

There is another reaſon for treating this ſubject with care, that men are very apt to conſider ſuch expreſſions as extravagant, and carrying matters an unreaſonable length. Miſtaking the nature of the duty, they are neither concerned to practiſe, nor will they allow that any body elſe does ſo in reality. I will therefore endeavour to ſhew you, 1. What

is not implied in crucifying the world; 2. Wherein it immediately and properly conſiſts.

On the *firſt* of theſe, I beg your attention to the following particulars.

1. The world's being crucified to us, does not imply that there is any evil in the natural world, conſidered in itſelf, and as the work of God. The whole frame of nature as it was produced and is preſerved by God, and the whole courſe of providence as conducted by him, are perfectly faultleſs. We may even ſay more, the creation carries on it ſuch an image of its Maker, as the materials are able to bear. In this view, it is our duty to look upon the world with reverence, and adore the glory of God in all its parts, from the higheſt to the loweſt. The evil ariſes wholly from ourſelves, and our diſpoſition to ſin. When we ſay a corrupt, enticing, deceitful world, it is but another way of ſpeaking for the corruption of the human heart.

2. It does not imply that we ſhould undervalue or be inſenſible of preſent mercies. Every gift of God is good, if it be received with thankfulneſs, and uſed with ſobriety. The more the world is crucified as it ought to be, the more we will diſcern the goodneſs of God, even in common mercies. It is matter of daily experience, and well worthy of obſervation, that thoſe who idolize the world moſt, as an object of ſinful deſire, do uſually deſpiſe the world moſt, as the ſubject or ground of thankfulneſs to God. A voluptuous, ambitious, or envious perſon, who purſues the world with eagerneſs, and never thinks he has enough, is commonly diſcontented and unthankful. His eyes are ſo wiſt-

fully fixed on what he wants, that he neither remembers nor values what he already has. On the contrary, the self-denied and mortified Christian, though despising the world as an object of pursuit, is yet deeply sensible of the kindness of Providence, in his daily preservation, or liberal provision. A mind formed upon the principles of the gospel, may look down with contempt upon the lustre of a throne, and yet know the value, and feel a sense of gratitude in the possession of a crumb.

3. It doth not imply that the world is useless to a believer, even with regard to his spiritual benefit. It is not only certain that he may have, but that he will have, the sanctified improvement of every state: Rom. viii. 28. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." The same mercies which make a wicked man insolent, make a good man thankful. They also extend his power of doing good to others. You may see by our Saviour's advice, how the world may be profitably employed: Luke, xvi. 9. "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." See also the account of his procedure at the great day, Matth. xxv. 34.—36. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger,

and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was ſick, and ye viſited me: I was in priſon, and ye came unto me."

4. It does not imply that we ought to retire from the employment or buſineſs of the world altogether. Though there is a manifeſt danger in being too much involved in buſineſs, as well as too much devoted to pleaſure; it is an error, on the other hand, to place religion in voluntary poverty, in monkiſh auſterity, or uncommanded maceration of the body. This is not doing, but deſerting our duty: it is not crucifying the world, but going out of it; it is not overcoming the world, but flying from it.

But let us now conſider, directly and poſitively, what is implied in the world's being crucified to us, and we to the world. And that the after illuſtrations may be at once more intelligible and more convincing, it will not be improper to begin by ſaying, in general, that we muſt be crucified to the world in thoſe reſpects in which man, at his firſt apoſtacy, fell away to the world from God. While man continued in innocence, the world, which in itſelf is without ſtain, was never put to any but a ſacred uſe. It was then a theatre of divine glory, as indeed it is ſtill; but not a ſcene of human guilt, as it is now. It was intended for a place of trial, however, in which man was left to the freedom of his own will; and therefore it was capable of being abuſed. Thence came that ſacrilegious attachment to the world, from which it is ſo much our intereſt to be effectually delivered.—But to explain this matter a little more at large, the world muſt be crucified to the believer in the following reſpects; which, though I confeſs they all come at laſt to the ſame

thing, yet I think it is proper and neceſſary to mention diſtinctly.

1. *As it is the ſubject and occaſion of, or a temptation to ſin.* It is very plain, that however faultleſs and excellent the whole works of nature and providence are in themſelves, from the corruption of our nature they become the food of carnal affection, the fuel of concupiſcence. The very liberality of Providence, and rich proviſion made for the ſupply of our wants, and the gratification of our appetites, becomes a temptation to groſs ſenſuality, and criminal indulgence. This is well deſcribed by the apoſtle John, 1 Epiſt. ii. 16. "For all that is in the world, the luſt of the fleſh, and the luſt of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." In this view, we ought to hold it in the utmoſt abhorrence. But how is this to be done? By ſeriouſly conſidering the unhappy and powerful influence it hath in ſoliciting us to evil. Inſtead of being taken with its charms, we ought to dread their force, we ought to be ſenſible how unequal we are to the conflict, and how unable, without ſuperior ſtrength, to keep ourſelves from its pollution.

When we ſee perſons in honour and power, and are tempted to envy their diſtinguiſhed rank in life, we ought to conſider how naturally exaltation tends to intoxicate the mind, how few are able to bear honour or reputation with humility, and how little reaſon we have to confide in our own ſteadineſs and reſolution. When we ſee the ſplendour of a rich and affluent ſtate, we ought to conſider the ſtrong temptation which commonly ariſes from riches, to

contempt of God, oppreſſion of others, ſenſuality of temper, and forgetfulneſs of eternity. Suffer me, on this ſubject, to make every man his own reprover. How few are there in a rich and affluent ſtate, whoſe conduct in the application of riches you can wholly approve! Are you not conſtantly blaming them for covetouſneſs and oppreſſion on the one hand, or prodigality on the other? How is it, then, that you entertain ſuſpicions that you yourſelves would be led aſtray by the ſame means? Is not this a ſtrange infatuation, and blindneſs to divine truth, even where every word of the Spirit of God is ratified by daily experience?

When we ſee and are tempted to envy the votaries of pleaſure, thoſe who live delicately and fare ſumptuouſly every day, we ought to conſider what a dangerous enſnaring thing appetite is, how it ſteals upon men inſenſibly, and at laſt inſlaves them abſolutely; how hard it is for the moſt cautious to ſet proper bounds to it, as well as how dreadful and fatal the exceſſive indulgence of it. To crucify the world, then, as a temptation to ſin, is not to conſider its charms by themſelves, but always in connection with their probable effects. This ſeems to have ſuggeſted the wiſe and well-conceived prayer of the prophet Agur, Prov. xxx. 7. 8. 9. "Two things have I required of thee, deny me them not before I die. Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me: leſt I be full, and deny thee, and ſay, Who is the Lord? or leſt I be poor, and ſteal, and take the name of my God in vain." On the ſame thing is founded the advice of

Solomon, with regard to the ſin of ſenſuality: Prov. xxiii. 31. "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itſelf aright."

2. The world muſt be crucified to the believer, *as it would be his ſupreme felicity and chief good.* This is no otherwiſe to be diſtinguiſhed from the former conſideration, than as the general courſe and ſtream of our affections differs from particular acts of tranſgreſſion. It is very neceſſary, however, to attend to it; for there are many under the habitual government of a worldly mind, who do not think themſelves, and who perhaps are not juſtly chargeable with groſs acts of irregularity and exceſs. I bleed inwardly to think, how many of the ordinary profeſſors of religion are here included. How many are there, who, if conſcience would be faithful, muſt confeſs, that the favour of God, his worſhip, his Sabbaths, his people, are not their ſupreme delight! Yet that this is eſſential to real religion, or rather is the ſubſtance of all true religion, I think we have repeated aſſurances in the holy ſcriptures. It is plain from the language of the pſalmiſt, Pſal. lxxiii. 25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I deſire beſides thee." It is plain from the ſum of the moral law, Luke x. 27. "Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy ſtrength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyſelf;" as alſo from that trying paſſage, Matth. x. 37. "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth ſon or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me."

Take heed then, my brethren, to this important truth. If the world keep its diſtance, ſo to ſpeak, it might be eſteemed, and uſed, in its proper place, and to its proper end; but if it will needs pretend to be what it is not, and to promiſe what it cannot give, we muſt take it for a deceiver, and hold it in deteſtation. Your Maker formed you for his own glory: He muſt be the reſt and conſolation of your ſouls, or they ſhall never have reſt; he muſt be their happineſs, or they ſhall be miſerable for ever. But if the world would ſeem to be your home, if it promiſeth you content and ſatisfaction, if the poſſeſſion of it is the ultimate end at which you aſpire, ſo that you do not heartily, and with affection, look any further, it is uſurping its Creator's throne; and therefore down with the idol, and tread it in the duſt.

Is not this the great queſtion with regard to us all, Whether the objects of faith or of ſenſe, things preſent or things to come, God or the world, has the poſſeſſion of our hearts? A believer who will thankfully receive and uſe the bleſſings of a preſent world from their proper end, will notwithſtanding hold it, and all its poſſeſſions, in the higheſt degree of contempt, when compared with the one thing needful. He will ſay, from the bottom of his heart, in the preſence of an all-ſeeing God, 'Lord, let me never have my portion in this world only. The glory of a throne, the moſt inexhauſtible mines of gold and ſilver, without thy favour, I would not only deſpiſe, but abhor.'

Whence ariſes this diſpoſition in the believer? From a conviction of the unſatisfying nature of all

earthly enjoyments; from an inward perſuaſion of this truth, That "the world, in its beſt ſtate, is altogether vanity;" from a ſenſe of the infinite diſproportion between the poſſeſſion of the creature, and the favour of the Creator; but, above all, from a deep and abiding conviction of the precarioufneſs and uncertainty of all earthly things. However undeniable it is, that the faſhion of this world paſſeth away, few there are who live under the ſtrong and lively practical impreſſion of it. The deceived hearts of ſinners believe the contrary. How well are they deſcribed by the pſalmiſt, Pſal. xlix. 11. 12. 13. "Their inward thought is, that their houſes ſhall continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names. Nevertheleſs, man being in honour, abideth not: he is like the beaſts that periſh. This their way is their folly; yet their poſterity approve of their ſayings!" One would think, nothing more ſhould be neceſſary to crucify the world, than to reflect upon the many deſcriptions given us in the word of God of its uncertain duration: Pſal. xxxvii. 35. 36. "I have ſeen the wicked in great power; and ſpreading himſelf like a green bay-tree. Yet he paſſed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I ſought him, but he could not be found." If. xl. 6. "And the voice ſaid, Cry. And he ſaid, What ſhall I cry? All fleſh is graſs, and all the goodlineſs thereof is as the flower of the field." I ſhall only add our Lord's deſcription of the ſudden call of a worldly man to death and judgement: Luke, xii. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. "And he ſpake a parable unto them, ſaying, The

ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do, I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God."

3. The world must be crucified, *as it pretends to be necessary to our felicity*. This is chiefly directed against those who love the world to excess, though at the same time they at least pretend to love God more. They seem to have chosen God as their supreme, but it does not appear that they have chosen him as their sufficient portion. The world still bulks so much in their eye, that they know no happiness or comfort of which it makes not a part. They see, or think they see, the insufficiency of the world, without the favour of God, as a refuge when the world falls; but they can no more rest satisfied in God without the world, than in the world without God. I have no doubt, you will be sensible there are many amongst us in this condition; nay, I am afraid there will be not a few within themselves secretly justifying this character and conduct. They will say, 'Is it possible to deny that the world is necessary to us while we continue here? is it not so to you as well as to us? and

therefore why ſhould it not be regarded in this light?'

To all ſuch I anſwer, The world, in a certain proportion, is indeed neceſſary to us; but this proportion is not to be aſcertained by us. It muſt be left to the diſpoſal of infinite wiſdom, without any conditions. When there is a divorce or ſeparation between the believer and the world, it is entire and complete, without reſerve or limitation. He gives up all as the object of carnal affection, that he may receive again, for a nobler purpoſe, that meaſure which ſeems neceſſary to the ſanctified will of God. He is juſt in the ſituation of a man who, having contracted obligations which he is unable to diſcharge, has ſurrendered his all into the hands of another, and has no further uſe of what was formerly his own, than as much, and as long, as the proprietor ſhall think fit. I know no image that more properly repreſents the condition of the believer; with this difference, that in human affairs the change is uſually for the worſe; but in ſpiritual things, the renunciation is an infinite advantage, and the ſeeming loſs an unſpeakable gain.

Think not, my brethren, that this is carrying matters to exceſs. It is what our Saviour expreſsly requires of all that would embrace his doctrine: Luke, ix. 23. "And he ſaid unto them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himſelf, and take up his croſs daily, and follow me." It is indeed one of the hard ſayings of the goſpel. You have heard it ſometimes ſaid, that every Chriſtian muſt be a martyr in reſolution; and doubtleſs the world is not thoroughly crucified, unleſs our attachment to every worldly enjoyment, without excep-

tion, be so broken, that we are ready to resign it whenever God, in his providence, shall see fit to demand it. We have an excellent lesson to this purpose, in the trial to which our Saviour put the young man in the gospel, with a decent and regular profession: Matth. xix. 21. 22. "Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions." To crucify the world, then, is to count no worldly enjoyment whatever necessary, either to our present comfort, or everlasting happiness, but to put an absolute and unshaken confidence in the wisdom and goodness of a reconciled God. This is excellently expressed by the prophet Habakkuk, ch. iii. 17. 18. "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olives shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

In the *last* place, The world must be crucified, *as it is a separate and independent good, without its due relation to God.* God himself alone is independent. All other things stand in an inseparable relation to him, and should be used in subserviency to his honour: "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things." Every rational creature, who continues in, or returns to his duty, discerns this relation, and maintains this subserviency. It was the first idolatry and sacrilege, to break the ties that join the Maker to his works, and love the creature

for its own ſake. But he that is crucified to the world, will conſider every earthly enjoyment as the gift of God: he will confeſs the goodneſs of God in beſtowing it, and will obey the command of God in the uſe and application of it. That this is the duty of a Chriſtian, is plain from the general ſtrain of the holy ſcriptures; and particularly from this expreſs and poſitive declaration, 1 Cor. x. 31. "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatſoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

The world, then, as a ſeparate independent good, or as a mere gratification of carnal deſire, is to be crucified. It was not given us for ſo low a purpoſe as the indulgence of appetite, but for nobler ends. But perhaps it will be neceſſary to obſerve, that ſome of the myſtic writers have raiſed a variety of improper queſtions on this ſubject. Some have affirmed the unlawfulneſs of taſting any of the ſweetneſs of created enjoyments, more than was barely neceſſary for ſubſiſtence. It is eaſy to ſee, that it muſt be very hard, in many ſuch caſes, to fix the bounds between neceſſity and convenience, uſe and pleaſure: hence the conſcience is involved in unſpeakable and endleſs perplexity. Upon this I would obſerve, that the general reference of all things, even common actions, to the glory of God, is ſufficiently and clearly eſtabliſhed upon the paſſage of ſcripture above mentioned. But in order to do this in the moſt profitable manner, ſome ſubordinate ends alſo muſt be conſidered; and therefore, not only what is neceſſary to health and comfort muſt be uſed with this view, but the enjoyment of many of the creatures may be allowed as

the fruits of divine bounty, and tending to inſpire an habitual chearfulneſs and gratitude to God.

I ſhall conclude with giving you theſe two general rules to be obſerved in the enjoyment of outward mercies.

1. That we have greater reaſon to guard againſt ſins of exceſs and intemperance than of abſtinence. The firſt are unſpeakably more common and prevalent than the other: they always have been ſo, and are always likely to be ſo. If ſome few have gone into ſuperſtition, by extraordinary mortification, thouſands have been betrayed into ſin, and at laſt brought to perdition, by the charms of a ſenſual life.

2. If any are in danger of erring on the oppoſite ſide, the way to diſcover when we are going wrong, is to conſider, whether the mortification renders us more ſpiritual, and more active, or, by exceſs of ſcrupuloſity, we are conſuming our time, and neglecting our duty. The deceits of Satan are very ſubtle: he fills ſome perſons with ſo many doubts upon every particular, that they are like one who makes little progreſs in his journey, from continual uncertainty, and frequent ſtopping to inquire the way. It is certainly far better to carry on the general ends of God's glory, and point to this as our ultimate purpoſe, than every now and then to entangle and embarraſs ourſelves with queſtions of little moment.

Before proceeding to the *second* general head, I ſhall finiſh this diſcourſe by a few obſervations for the improvement of what hath been already ſaid. And,

1. From what hath been ſaid upon this ſubject, you may learn the great *importance* of the duty; that it is the diſtinguiſhing character of a real Chriſtian, to be crucified to the world, and the world to him. Alas! how many deceive themſelves in this particular! How many ſatisfy themſelves with a name to live, when they are dead; with a form of godlineſs, while they deny the power thereof! How many, with a decent and regular outward profeſſion, are yet wholly devoted to the world! Their meditation dwells upon it; their affections center in it; their care is beſtowed upon it; and their delights entirely flow from it. Let it be conſidered, that there is nothing more contrary to true religion. The world, or created good, is the great competitor with God for the heart. All the honour and eſteem that is given to it is taken from God. All the ſervice and obedience that is beſtowed upon it is refuſed to God. Call to mind ſome of the paſſages of ſcripture referred to in the preceding diſcourſe; particularly the following: 1 John, ii. 15. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

My dear brethren, there are many who would look with contempt or indignation on thoſe who are guilty of particular ſcandalous and diſgraceful ſins, for example, on a profane ſwearer, drunkard, or unclean perſon, while yet they themſelves are as much wedded to the world, and have as great an inward averſion at the practice of piety, and the power of the ſpiritual life, as any of them all. Other ſins are but the body or the members,

worldlineſs is the ſoul and ſpirit of irreligion. Other ſins are but the acts or expreſſions, worldlineſs the principle that gives them life.

How important a part this is of the Chriſtian character, will plainly appear from theſe two conſiderations: 1. Worldlineſs may be itſelf the principle which reſtrains men from many other ſins. A deſire of reputation, a delight in the eſteem of others, is often the cauſe of outward decency; nay, it is not ſeldom the cauſe of apparent zeal and eminent hypocriſy. 2. There may be as great a degree of worldlineſs with as without a profeſſion of piety. Men may retain a form of godlineſs chiefly to ſet themſelves free from the reproofs of conſcience, that their preſent enjoyments may have the higher reliſh. Nay, I cannot help obſerving, that though covetouſneſs is one of the groſs ſins mentioned in ſcripture, as entirely ſubverſive of religion, there is ſcarcely any ſin that can be carried to ſuch a degree, without caſting off the profeſſion of it. Hence it plainly appears how important a part of the character of a real Chriſtian it is to be crucified to the world. Without this the ſoundeſt principles, and the ſtricteſt profeſſion, will avail nothing; for they that are "Chriſt's, have crucified the fleſh, with its affections and luſts."

2. From what hath been ſaid, you may ſee, not only the importance, but the great *extent* of the duty. The world itſelf, and all that is therein, in the ſenſe formerly explained, muſt be crucified. That you may, in ſome meaſure, conceive the extent of this, conſider the common diviſion of worldly enjoyments, viz. riches, honours, and pleaſures.

All these, without exception, and all these equally, must be denied by the Christian. You shall often see, that the covetous man will despise and hate the prodigal, and even express the greatest zeal against riot, and extravagance of every kind. The sensualist, on the other hand, despises the miser, as glued to the world, and a slave to the most sordid of all human passions. And the ambitious man, eager in the pursuit of honour and dignity, vainly conceives himself superior to both. But they are all equally opposite to and inconsistent with the spirit of the gospel. If your supreme delight, if your portion and happiness is here, it is of little consequence whether your hearts are set upon "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life." It is with the soul as with the body: there are many different diseases taking place in different parts, and shewing themselves by different symptoms, but which will equally end in death as their effect.

3. You may hence learn the *difficulty* of the duty; to be crucified to the world, and yet live in the world; to be crucified to the world, and yet to possess the world; to be crucified to the world, and yet to have a great part of our thoughts and love necessarily employed about the world. The temptation is ever present, and, through the corruption and treachery of our own hearts, fatally strong. Ought we not hence to infer the absolute necessity of continual vigilance, and continual prayer? continual vigilance in our duty, and jealousy of every temptation that may be in danger of diverting us from it? continual prayer to the Father of lights,

in the name of Chriſt, for ſupernatural ſtrength? Every exerciſed Chriſtian knows from experience the danger of the world as an enemy, and how hard it is to keep ſuch clear views of the things of eternity, as to be preſerved from an undue and ſinful attachment to the things of time. The world is dangerous even to thoſe who maintain an habitual jealouſy of it, and hold it as an enemy: how much more muſt it be ruinous and fatal to thoſe who love and proſecute it as the object of their chief deſire!

4. I ſhall now conclude, by improving this ſubject for the purpoſe of ſelf-examination. And ſurely no ſerious hearer will be backward to bring himſelf to the trial. My beloved hearers, I ſpeak to all of every rank, high and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, who profeſs to bear the name of Chriſtians: Are you, or are you not, crucified to the world, and the world to you? All real believers are ſo. If you are not, your riches or your poverty, your honour or your ſhame, your regular behaviour, or even your zeal for public duties, will avail you nothing in the day of Chriſt's appearance. I am ſenſible, that the deciſion of the queſtion, Whether you are, or are not, crucified to the world? may often be attended with no little difficulty. I will therefore, as far as I am able, endeavour to aſſiſt you in the trial. For which purpoſe, I beg your attention to the following obſervations.

1. You are crucified to the world, if you do not habitually allow your thoughts to dwell upon it, and your deſires to run out after it. The croſs was an abhorred object, which no body could look up-

on with delight. Worldlineſs is often as much diſcovered by our deſires after what we have not, as by the uſe or employment of what we have. There are many whoſe great delight ſeems to ariſe from the fond expectations they entertain of worldly happineſs to come: nay, there are many who are ſo ſlothful as not to purſue the world, and yet feed themſelves with the very imagination of it. Their thoughts, and even their language, conſtantly runs upon idle fancies, and romantic ſuppoſitions of the happineſs they ſhould enjoy, were they in ſuch or ſuch a ſtate. Now, my brethren, he that is crucified to the world will make conſcience of reſtraining theſe irregular deſires; and, from a deep conviction of the vanity of the world, will find little pleaſure in the contemplation of it.

2. Your being crucified to the world will appear in the moderation of your delight and complacency in what you poſſeſs of it. You will not, if I may ſpeak ſo, give yourſelves up to it, but will always qualify the enjoyment of it by a reflection upon its vanity in itſelf, and its ſhort duration as to any connection we ſhall have with it. We are ready to pity the weakneſs of children, when we ſee them apply themſelves with ſo much eagerneſs to trifles, and ſo greatly delighted with their amuſements and enjoyments. A parent, looking on them when hotly engaged at play, will be at once pleaſed to ſee them happy, and at the ſame time filled with a tender commiſeration of their want of reflection. Something of the ſame view one crucified to the world has of all earthly enjoyments. Many a grown perſon will ſmile at the play of children,

while he himſelf is perhaps as eagerly engaged in the ſchemes of ambition, in political ſtruggles, and conteſts for power; which are often as great trifles as the play-things of children, only that they are the play-things of men.

3. You are crucified to the world if you have low hopes and expectations from it. It is hope that ſtirs us up chiefly to action in all our purſuits. And ſo long as we entertain high thoughts of what the world will afford us in ſome after-ſeaſon, we are not crucified to it. There is a common proverbial ſaying, 'If it were not for hope, the heart would break:' juſt ſo, when our hopes from the world are deſtroyed, the heart of the old man is broken. We are exceeding ready to think, that were ſuch or ſuch a difficulty or uneaſineſs removed, could we obtain ſuch or ſuch an advantage in view, we would be happy. But there is always a deception at bottom. We vainly think, that happineſs ariſes from the creature; but he that is crucified to the world judges, by paſt experience, that it hath little comfort to give; and therefore he will place but little dependence upon it.

4. He is crucified to the world who hath truly ſubdued all invidious diſpoſitions towards the poſſeſſion of it. There are many who ſeem to have little comfort from their own enjoyments; but there is reaſon to fear, that it ariſes, not ſo much from ſelf-denial, as from diſcontent. The world may be ſaid to be crucified to them, but they are not crucified to the world. It is by this that worldlineſs expreſſes itſelf chiefly in the lower ranks of life. Thoſe who are obliged to live moderately

and hardly, from mere penury, often ſhew, by their carriage and language, that they have as much ſenſuality in their hearts, as thoſe who indulge their irregular deſires to the greateſt exceſs. But he that is crucified to the world, not only ſees all its pomp and ſplendour in others without repining, but will often beſtow a thought of compaſſion upon the great, for the inſnaring circumſtances in which they are placed with regard to their ſouls. And ſurely they are of all others moſt to be pitied. May the Lord, in mercy, convince them of their danger; and, in the mean time, preſerve his own people from being led aſtray by their influence and example.

SERMON X.

THE WORLD CRUCIFIED BY THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

GALATIANS, vi. 14. laſt clauſe.

—— *By whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world.*

I Now proceed to the *ſecond* thing propoſed, which was, To ſhow the influence of the croſs of Chriſt in crucifying the world. This, my brethren, deſerves your moſt ſerious attention, as pointing you to the great and vital principle of the Chriſtian's ſanctification, the true and only ſource of ſpiritual comfort and peace. The croſs of Chriſt is always conſidered in the apoſtolic writings as an object of the higheſt dignity and merit; and the believer is there taught to ſpeak of it in expreſſions of the warmeſt attachment and regard. Witneſs the words of the text itſelf, in the preceding clauſe: "God forbid that I ſhould glory ſave in the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt." We may perhaps be eaſily induced, in a time of external quietneſs and peace, to adopt this ſentiment as an opinion, or to

uſe it as a form ; but happy, and only happy, thoſe in whom it dwells as an ever-preſent truth, and operates as a daily governing principle !

Taking the ſubject in great latitude, I might obſerve, that the croſs of Chriſt being the price paid for the bleſſings of ſalvation in general, every illuminating diſcovery in the mind, and every gracious affection in the heart, which are the work of the divine Spirit, may be juſtly aſcribed to it. But I propoſe, at this time, to conſider it ſingly as an object of faith, and to ſhew how the firm perſuaſion and frequent recollection of this great truth tends to crucify the world to us, and us to the world ; the rather, that we find elſewhere our victory over the world aſcribed to faith, and this faith particularly terminating on the Son of God : 1 John, v. 4. 5. " For whoſoever is born of God, overcometh the world : and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jeſus is the Son of God ?" For the further illuſtration of this ſubject, then, let us obſerve,

1. That the croſs of Chriſt crucifies the world, as it gives us an immediate and ſtriking view of the mortality of our nature, as well as the original and general cauſe of this mortality. The vanity of created things is in nothing more manifeſt, than in their precarious nature, particularly our own tendency to the duſt, by which all earthly relations ſhall be ſpeedily and entirely diſſolved. In this view, indeed, you may ſay, that the death of any other perſon, ſickneſs, and all its attending ſymptoms, or a funeral, with its mournful ſolemnities, tends

to crucify the world: and moſt certainly they do. But there is ſomething ſtill more in the croſs of Chriſt. There we ſee, not only the death of our nature, but the death of the Son of God in our room. There we are carried back to a view of the great cauſe of the univerſal reign of the king of terrors. Sin, ſin firſt brought death into the world; and this made it neceſſary that Chriſt "ſhould taſte of death for every man," that we might be reſtored to ſpiritual life. Mortality, therefore, is written in the moſt legible characters on the croſs of Chriſt. Nay, the curſe of creation itſelf is written upon the croſs of Chriſt. We cannot look upon it, therefore, in a ſerious manner, without being deeply affected with the doom which we ourſelves have ſtill to undergo: "Duſt thou art, and to duſt thou ſhalt return." It is impoſſible to avoid knowing that we muſt die; but thoſe only diſcover the moment of this truth, who ſee its procuring cauſe. Thoſe only have juſt and abiding impreſſions of the ſpeedy approach of natural death, who are filled with concern for their own deliverance from the power of the ſecond death.

2. The croſs of Chriſt crucifies the world to a believer, as it ſhews him how little he deſerves at the hand of God. Believers on the croſs of Chriſt ſee him ſtanding in their room, and bearing the wrath of an offended God, which was their due. When this is not only profeſſed with the mouth, but received into the heart, it gives a deep conviction of the evil of ſin, and lays the ſinner proſtrate in humility and ſelf-abaſement. Muſt not this greatly weaken and mortify all worldly affection, which

takes its rise from pride and self-sufficiency? It is, if I may speak so, a sort of claim and demand upon Providence, as if something were due to us. Worldly persons, in prosperity, not only cleave to the world as their portion, but may be said to assert their title to it as their property. The same inward disposition may be discovered by their carriage in the opposite state. When their schemes are broken, and their hopes blasted, by repeated disappointments, or when their possessions are taken from them by unexpected strokes, they resist and rebel with impatience and indignation, as if some person had done them wrong.

But when men are sensible that they deserve nothing at the hand of God, this mortifies their earthly desires, and puts their complaints to silence. See how Job expresses himself after all his calamities, as sensible that he had lost nothing of his own, chap. i. 21. "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Let me speak of this, my brethren, as a gracious disposition, which, alas! is too often but weak, yet surely hath place in the heart of every child of God. Let me suppose him convinced, that he is unworthy of the least of all God's mercies; will he not keep his possessions the more loosely, and will he not quit his hold the more easily? But where shall we learn real self-abasement so well as from the cross? where shall we learn how little we deserve that is good, so well as in that place which shews we have indeed deserved every thing that is

evil? where ſhall we learn to make moderate demands of created mercies; but where we ſee that not only the creature, but life itſelf, was forfeited by our guilt? Let me ſuppoſe a condemned criminal carried, with many others, to a ſcaffold, there receiving a pardon, and witneſſing, in the execution of others, what was the ſentence of the law upon himſelf; will he, at this inſtant, think you, be impatient, or thankful? Will he be jealous of the honour or reſpect paid to him? will he quarrel about the dignity or convenience of the place aſſigned to him? No, ſurely. Loſt in the conſideration of the fate he has eſcaped, and the favour he has received, he will pay little regard to matters of ſmall comparative importance. Juſt ſo the Chriſtian, placed by faith at the foot of the croſs, deeply moved by a diſcovery of the wrath of God, which he had deſerved to ſuffer to eternity, and taking an immediate view of what his Redeemer ſuffered to deliver him from it, will be little thoughtful of the world, or any of its enjoyments.

3. The croſs of Chriſt crucifies the world, by reverſing all worldly maxims, and ſhewing of how light eſtimation worldly greatneſs is in the ſight of God. So long as worldly maxims prevail, and worldly greatneſs is in high eſteem, the croſs of Chriſt is a deſpiſed object. But ſo ſoon as this object acquires bulk and value in the believer's eye, by being taken for what it really is, the world is diſgraced in its turn. It pleaſed God, in his infinite wiſdom, for the ſalvation of ſinners, to ſend his own Son into the world, in human nature:

and as it was in itſelf a deep ſtep of humiliation, for the Son of God to be found in faſhion as a man; ſo, even in this aſſumed nature, he was attended with every circumſtance of meanneſs and baſeneſs. No retinue of illuſtrious miniſters to ſerve him; no ſplendid or elegant apartment to receive him; but born of a mean woman, brought forth in a ſtable, and laid in a manger. Memorable and inſtructive hiſtory indeed! which ſhall never be forgotten, where the goſpel is preached, to the end of time.

Remember, my beloved hearers, though divine ſweetneſs and benignity adorned his carriage, though divine power and energy attended his miniſtrations; yet poverty, ſlander, and contempt were his continual portion; ſo that he could ſay in the language of the prophet, "Reproach hath broken my heart:" and again, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have neſts; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Some of the ancients have repreſented the Saviour as of extraordinary beauty of countenance and comelineſs of form, founded perhaps on a literal interpretation of that expreſſion of the pſalmiſt, Pſal. xlv. 2. "Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath bleſſed thee for ever." Without being poſitive, I ſhall only ſay, that this does not correſpond much with the other circumſtances of his incarnation. And, indeed, ſome have ſuppoſed directly the contrary, founding their opinion upon the language of the prophet Iſaiah, chap. lii. 14. "As many were aſtoniſhed at thee; (his viſage was ſo marred more than any man, and his

form more than the ſons of men);" as alſo, chap. liii. 2. "For he ſhall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comelineſs: and when we ſhall ſee him, there is no beauty that we ſhould deſire him." Whatever be in this, it is beyond all queſtion, that the whole courſe of his life, and particularly the remarkable concluſion of it, was one continued tract of ſuffering and mortification.

Does not this, Chriſtians, bring a reproach upon worldly greatneſs, and ſtain the pride of all human glory? Does it not ſhow how little it is eſteemed of God, and how little it is an evidence of his acceptation or approbation? What an influence muſt this have upon the believer to crucify the world! How muſt it endear to him a mean and deſpiſed, and reconcile him to a ſuffering ſtate! With what propriety does the Chriſtian, when he is baptiſed in the name of Chriſt, renounce the world, its pomps, and its pleaſures! Does not a ſingle reflection on the deſpiſed ſtate of our Redeemer, in the days of his fleſh, make you patient under contempt, and extinguiſh the deſire of applauſe? Have you any remaining uneaſineſs at ſeeing others getting before you in the career of ambition, overtopping you with titles, eclipſing you with ſplendour? Do you not now ſee the propriety of the account given of the carriage of the apoſtles, when the world and they were at variance? Acts, v. 41. "And they departed from the preſence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to ſuffer ſhame for his name." Whether do you now envy the conqueror or the ſufferer, the prince or the martyr? Wherever there is a real Chriſtian

raiſed to opulence by the will of God, or ſurrounded with enſigns of dignity and honour, will not this conſideration fill him with deep humility and ſelf-denial, and a holy jealouſy, leſt he ſhould abuſe his influence, or miſapply his talents? The higheſt honour of real ability is uſefulneſs, the brighteſt ornament of worldly greatneſs is ſelf-abaſement. All this ſhews, in the cleareſt manner, how the croſs of Chriſt crucifies the world, by reverſing every worldly maxim, and giving a new turn to the principles of honour and of ſhame. This leads me to obſerve,

4. In the *laſt* place, That the croſs of Chriſt crucifies the world, by putting a quite different object of deſire and affection in its room. Our limited powers can attend but to few things at once; and therefore, when any one acquires an intereſt in our affections, it muſt comparatively weaken or deſtroy the intereſt of others, eſpecially thoſe of an oppoſite or independent kind. Make a new bed to a river, and turn its ſtream in that direction, and it will immediately dry up its former channel. Now, the croſs of Chriſt preſents to us an object of infinite importance, peace and reconciliation with God here, and everlaſting happineſs in his preſence hereafter. Can any worldly object be laid in the balance with theſe? What eſteem or attention can it merit in compariſon with theſe?

Whether we conſider the end or the means of ſalvation, the croſs of Chriſt tends to ſupplant the world, by improving our views of and increaſing our affection to both. It ſhews the infinite importance of eternity and its conſequences: and what more

proper to deliver us from an undue attachment to the things of time. Eternity, by its greatneſs, makes time itſelf ſhrink into a point, and annihilates all thoſe little temporary diſtinctions on which worldly affection entirely depends. What doth it ſignify to him that views eternity aright, whether he be for a few years in health or ſickneſs, riches or poverty, on a throne or in a cottage? How immenſe, according to human meaſure, appears the difference between the poſſeſſions of ſome perſons in the world and others! But of all the generations before us, who have now fallen aſleep, how equal is the condition in this reſpect! The monarch and ſlave, when laid in the duſt, fill nearly the ſame ſpace.

If we conſider the means of religion, the croſs of Chriſt, applied by a convinced ſinner, opens to him ſuch a proſpect of the infinite unmerited love of God, and of this aſtoniſhing expreſſion of it, the death of his Son, as at once captivates the heart, and, if I may ſpeak ſo, occupies ſo much room there, as leaves but little for any other object. How ſoon did it open the heart of the publican Zaccheus, and expel the ſpirit of covetouſneſs and extortion! Luke, xix. 8. "And Zaccheus ſtood, and ſaid unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor: and if I have taken any thing from any man by falſe accuſation, I reſtore him fourfold." In how ſtrong a manner does the apoſtle Paul expreſs his comparative eſteem of the croſs of Chriſt! Phil. iii. 7. 8. "But what things were gain to me, thoſe I counted loſs for Chriſt. Yea doubtleſs, and I count all things but

loſs, for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus my Lord: for whom I have ſuffered the loſs of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Chriſt." This is the very ſame diſpoſition with that which he expreſſes in the text; and it differs no otherwiſe from that of every Chriſtian, than that it is probable he had a particular view to his calling as a miniſter and an apoſtle. Captivated with a ſenſe of his Redeemer's love, filled with a view of the glory of his croſs, and devoted to his ſervice in the miniſtry of the goſpel, he renounces all worldly proſpects, and ſets at defiance every thing that might diſtract his attention, or divide his care: "God forbid that I ſhould glory, ſave in the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; by whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world."

III. I PROCEED now, in the *laſt* place, to make ſome practical improvement of what hath been ſaid. And as, upon this intereſting ſubject, it is neceſſary that I ſhould ſpeak with all ſerioufneſs and fidelity, as well as at ſome length, ſo I muſt earneſtly beſeech you, as you regard your preſent peace, your comfort in the hour of death, and the everlaſting happineſs of your ſouls, to hear it with attention and application.

1. I muſt take the opportunity to reprove the ſin, and ſhew the danger, of thoſe who are wedded to the world. I would willingly interrupt that comfort, and break that peace, which will end in perdition. For this purpoſe, and in order to make the reproof more diſtinct and effectual, I ſhall direct it ſeparately to the three following characters.

(1.) To those whose love of the world is so great, that they scruple not to use, occasionally at least, if not habitually, sinful means of getting or keeping possession of it. This indeed opens to us a very extensive field: it leads us to consider all the particular sins which an inordinate love of the world may produce, or increase. It is melancholy, my brethren, to think what contention and variance, nay, what hatred and violence, even amongst the nearest relations, the division of worldly property occasions. What envy and grudging, what slander and evil-speaking, between person and person, between family and family! And even in the ordinary way of traffic, what art and dissimulation, what falsehood and equivocation, are to be found between man and man! But what I have chiefly in view is, to speak a few words to those who, in order to promote their worldly ends, have been guilty of direct dishonesty, and known injustice. How many are there whose consciences, if they would be faithful, must tell them, that they are now in possession of the fruits of unlawful gain! O the blindness of those deluded unhappy souls! If an inordinate love of the world, however honestly acquired, is not only sinful, but destructive of your eternal interest; what shall become of those who have trodden under foot the laws both of God and man, in order to obtain it? If an excessive love of the most lawful enjoyments, father and mother, wife and children, is inconsistent with salvation; what must become of those who have loved and followed the gain of unrighteousness? what must become of those who, to clothe their backs, or

feed their bellies, or gratify their pride, have not ſcrupled to be guilty of breach of truſt, or breach of promiſe, of open oppreſſion, or ſecret fraud? If every poor worldling muſt ſtand trembling upon the brink of eternity, when he ſees all his painted ſhadows ready to ſink into everlaſting darkneſs; what horror muſt ſeize upon the dying ſinner, who is juſt about to ſurrender all his dear poſſeſſions to another, while his conſcience is loaded with the guilt of fraud or perjury? and this he cannot leave behind him. O! my dear brethren, tremble at the thoughts of diſhoneſt gain; loathe it; return it; ſhake your hands clear of it. It will embitter your enjoyments; it will be a moth in your ſubſtance, a fire in your conſciences on earth, and a hell to your ſouls, after the earth itſelf, and all that is therein, is burnt up.

(2.) I would addreſs this reproof to thoſe who are apparently more decent and regular, whom a ſenſe of honour, or a deſire of the approbation of their fellow-creatures, preſerves from groſſer crimes, or whom perhaps natural conſcience perſuades to take up the outward and ordinary part of religion as a form. Many ſuch perſons are wedded to the world. Their thoughts are there, their delights are there, their hopes and expectations are only there. Bear with me, my brethren, in preſſing this a little; and do not turn away, and refuſe the charge. Worldlineſs is the reigning ſin, and will be the eternal ruin of many perſons of better rank, to whoſe converſation a more liberal way of thinking, and a ſenſe of decency, may give even an amiable appearance. I would beſeech the attention of ſuch perſons to what ſhall now be ſaid; not from any

diſreſpect to their ſtate and ſituation in civil life, God knoweth! but from fidelity to their ſouls. Conſider, I pray you, the extreme danger of worldlineſs of mind. It is itſelf a great and aggravated ſin, and is the parent of many others. It is a ſin, where it hath dominion, inconſiſtent with ſalvation. Hear the words of the Lord Jeſus: "He that loveth father or mother, ſon or daughter, more than me, is not worthy of me." There are ſome ſorts of ſinners on whom you would look with contempt or abhorrence; but you may poſſibly deceive yourſelves. The ſtrict and regular, but covetous Phariſees, little thought that the publicans and ſinners were nearer the kingdom of heaven than themſelves. I do not ſay this to extenuate ſin of any kind, but to guard you againſt the power of deluſion and ſelf-deceit. I know that none but the ſearcher of hearts can make a certain judgement of the degree of depravity in different characters; and therefore I do not ſo much urge the compariſon for your condemnation, as caution you againſt relying upon it for your juſtification. The unalterable rule, taken both from the law and the goſpel, is this: Which of the two has the ſupreme commanding intereſt in your affections, God, or the world? As an eminent author expreſſes it, 'He is the moſt wicked man, that hath in his heart the ſtrongeſt intereſt that is oppoſite to God; and all that is not ſubordinate to him is oppoſite to him: I ſay again, the greater creature-intereſt, the more ſinful the ſtate. Though you be neither thieves, nor extortioners, nor adulterers, your ſin may be as deep rooted, and the intereſt of the world as predominant, or more ſo,

in you, than in some of them. Alas! Sirs, the abstaining from some of these sins, and living like civil and orderly persons, though it is so far commendable, is not enough. If the world be not crucified to you, and you to it, such abstinence will but hide your sin and misery, and hinder your shame and repentance, but not prevent your eternal damnation. Your lands and your houses, and hopeful posterity, and other provision you have made for the flesh, may have more of your hearts, than the world hath of the heart of a poor wretch who never had so much to idolize.' Upon the whole, my brethren, let me only put you in mind, this exhortation is not less necessary to you than the like cautions were to the hearers of Christ in the days of his flesh, whom he warns against the dangers of an affluent state: Luke, viii. 14. "And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choaked with cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection." Matth. xix. 23. 24. "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." It ought to give you great consolation, that he adds, v. 26. "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

(3.) I would address this exhortation to the children of God, in whom I know the world is crucified upon the whole; yet, alas! it still retains such a degree of interest as is provoking to God,

offenſive to others, and hurtful to their own peace. In what glaſs can you ſee more clearly the weakneſs of faith, and every other gracious diſpoſition, than in their little influence in reſtraining the motions of carnal affection? Had the great objects of faith and hope that place in our hearts, and that entire dominion in our affections, which they ought to have; would there be ſo much conformity to worldly maxims and practices, as is daily to be ſeen? would there be ſo much emulation in all the outward expreſſions of pride and gaiety, in dreſs, furniture, and equipage? would there be ſo much deſire of the increaſe of wealth and greatneſs? would there be ſo much envy of thoſe who are ſucceſsful, and go beyond us? Shall I tell you how a Chriſtian ſhould look upon thoſe who proſper remarkably in their worldly affairs? If they are truly pious, he ſhould rejoice with them; for here is ſo much wealth and influence put into ſuch hands as will employ them in doing good. On the other hand, if they are wicked, he ſhould ſincerely pity them, as immerſed in the moſt dangerous temptations. If we were thoroughly dead to the world, and the world to us, would the loſs of wealth or reputation wound us ſo deeply as they generally do? would the malice or ſlanders of others make ſo ſenſible an impreſſion? It ſhould be pitied, as it is their ſin; but it may eaſily be deſpiſed, as it is our danger. Try this by the condition and conduct of the oppoſite character. A wicked man is dead to God and ſpiritual things. What then does he value the loſs of any thing of that nature? Tell him that he hath loſt ſuch or ſuch an opportunity of commu-

nion with God, in his worſhip in public, or in family; that he hath loſt an opportunity of excellent inſtruction, in a ſermon or diſcourſe; with what manifeſt contempt will he receive the information, and ſmile at your weakneſs and credulity in ſhewing any attachment to ſuch things! Were we crucified to the world as we ought, would there be ſo much impatience under the hand of God in poverty, ſickneſs, the loſs of relations, or calamities of any kind? The lopping off a limb or member that is dead, gives little or no uneaſineſs: it is the life that remains which occaſions the pain of ſeparation. If the world ſat looſe upon us, its removal would ſcarcely be felt; but we muſt needs ſuffer at the very heart when any thing is withdrawn that hath its hold there. Let me therefore beſeech you, in this to confeſs your ſin, to be humbled for it, and to pray that you may be daily more and more delivered from it.

2. I ſhall improve this ſubject for pointing out the uſe of affliction, and the ground of your conſolation under it. This world at beſt is but a ſcene of ſorrow; and we then reap moſt comfort from it when we are ſenſible that it is ſo. The very purpoſe of affliction is, to ſhew us the vanity and uncertainty of all created comforts, and deliver us from an exceſſive attachment to them. It is much more difficult to crucify a ſmiling than a frowning world. It is not eaſy to hate it in its lovelieſt form, or, if I may uſe ſuch an expreſſion, to ſpeak harſhly to it when it is ſpeaking kindly to us? But in the time of affliction, when we are obliged to confeſs its vanity, is it not reaſonable to expect that our affection

for it will be abated? I have said, that this seems the natural effect of suffering; because it is the lesson evidently carried in it. And accordingly the prophet Isaiah says, chap. xxvi. 9. "For when thy judgements are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." I am sensible, however, that the reception which affliction meets with, and the effects which it produces, are very different in different persons. It makes the worldly man curse his idol in the rage of despair; and it makes the child of God abhor the idolatry, and dwell with complacency on his unchangeable portion.

Consider this, I beseech you, my brethren; for you are all liable to the stroke of affliction, young and old, rich and poor, holy and unholy. It is indeed lamentable to see the fretful impatience of those to whom the world is blasted from without, but the love of the world, in all its strength, still subsisting within. They have no source of consolation in themselves; and nothing comfortable can be spoken to them by others in a manner consistent with truth and duty. To deal faithfully with them, we must do our utmost to add the bitterness of repentance to their other sufferings; and this the cruel kindness of surrounding relations will seldom permit to be done. In the case of dying persons, in particular, with what concern have I heard friends and physicians telling the grossest falsehoods, in order to keep off for a few moments the apprehension of what they knew must immediately and certainly take place, and be the more terrible for the surprise.

On the other hand, it is comfortable to reflect, that the sanctifying influence of afflictions is no less the language of experience than of scripture. Many have borne their testimony, and set their seal to it. Some have been so effectually mortified to pride and vanity, by the injuries or the slanders of others, that they have even felt consolation in the reproach itself. But, in a particular manner, I have been often pleased with young persons to whom the world, and all their expectations from it, have been crucified by early affliction, expressing themselves, not merely with submission, but with serenity and thankfulness. Bear with me in mentioning a real instance, known to myself, of a young man, who had been long confined with a diseased member, and had a near and certain prospect of his dissolution. When, at the desire of some person present, his loathsome sore was uncovered, he expressed himself, to the best of my remembrance, in these very words: 'There it is; and a precious treasure it has been to me! It saved from the folly and vanity of youth; it made me cleave to God as my only portion, and eternal glory, as my only hope; and I think it has now brought me very near to my Father's house.' Now, what a spring of consolation is here! Our duty, our business, our interest is, to crucify the world, and to be crucified to it. May we not, then, with the utmost gratitude, as well as patience, receive the appointments of that God who has promised, not only to deliver us from all our sufferings in due time, not only to make up and recompense our losses with something better, of a different kind, but has assured us, that these very sufferings

and loſſes, as their immediate effect, ſhall crucify ſin, and further our meetneſs for his own preſence?

3. Let me improve this ſubject by earneſtly exhorting you to endeavour to acquire more and more of the temper and ſtate of mind expreſſed by the holy apoſtle, in the text, "By whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world." Be perſuaded, my beloved hearers, to look upon all created things with the eye of faith. Remember their relation to God. He is their maker and yours; and they muſt not be loved or ſerved but in ſubordination to his glory. Do not place your chief happineſs in them; do not eſteem them too highly; do not love them immoderately; do not proſecute them too violently. Place your chief happineſs in the favour of God, in communion with him on earth, and the well-grounded hope of the perpetual enjoyment of him in heaven; and let your regard to earthly things be no other, nor greater, than is ſuited to this end. That I may preſs this reſolution upon you, allow me to propoſe the three following conſiderations.

(1.) Conſider the unſatisfying nature of all earthly enjoyments. They do not at all carry in them that ſweetneſs and excellence which worldly men ſuppoſe. Sin has drawn a miſt of deluſion over the minds of men. The inflamed and diſordered appetites of our corrupted nature always promiſe themſelves, in worldly poſſeſſions, a ſatisfaction infinitely greater than they are able to afford. We have this from the confeſſion of many who have made the experiment with every poſſible advantage. The book of Eccleſiaſtes is an admirable and animated deſcription of the vanity of human

enjoyments. Solomon seems to have been raised up in providence, for this among other ends, that he might leave behind him an account of the vanity of earthly greatness. And this is the title that he hath left written upon all that the world can give: Eccles. i. 2. "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Power and wealth, dignity and fame, variety of pleasures, nay, knowledge itself, as a source of present comfort, he affirms the vanity of them all: Eccles. ii. 11. "Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and behold, all was vanity, and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." And towards the close of the same book, chap. xii. 12. he says, "And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weakness of the flesh."

Have there not been innumerable examples of the same testimony in every age and country? And what says your own experience? or your observation of others? Do men indeed rise in comfort and satisfaction, in proportion as they rise in station or opulence? On the contrary, do they not rather commonly increase in anxiety and discontent? Do you indeed think, that those who appear in gilded equipages have always on that account the most joyful hearts? Alas! there cannot be a greater mistake. Could you see what passes within, there would appear ungoverned passions, ungratified desires, and disappointed hopes; and could you enter their houses, you would find weariness and impa-

tience, family-diſtreſſes, family-diſorders, and family-quarrels. It has been an old, and it is a moſt juſt obſervation, particularly upon avarice, That the deſire ſtill grows with the poſſeſſion. It is the ſame with every other ſinful paſſion. Indulgence does not gratify ſo much as it inflames them. Let a man climb ever ſo high on the ladder of ambition, he ſees ſtill others before him; and emulation and envy are as ſtrong, or ſtronger, between thoſe who ſtand on the adjoining ſteps at the top as at the bottom. There is one particular remark, and ſerves at once to ſhow the vanity of the world, and the ſinfulneſs of human nature: The greater variety of worldly comforts any perſon poſſeſſes, he is not the more, but the leſs content, under the want of any one. The more and the longer any perſon hath been accuſtomed in obſequiouſneſs or flattery, he is the more impatient of the leaſt contradiction. The more abundant and univerſal reſpect that has been paid to any perſon, he is the more deeply wounded by neglect or contempt; as Haman, notwithſtanding all his greatneſs, was quite unſatisfied while there remained one poor man in the king's gate who would not do him reverence. Take but one example more. If a man hath great and extenſive poſſeſſions, and is without children, he is the more diſtreſſed to think, that ſo noble an eſtate and family ſhould be without an heir, and will often envy the families of the poor, as if it were hard meaſure, that he who had ſo many temporal mercies ſhould not have all. Upon the whole, you may ſee, that there is a double vanity in the preſent ſtate. Crea-

ted comforts are unsatisfying on the one hand, and human desires are insatiable on the other.

(2.) Consider the uncertainty of all earthly enjoyments. No circumstance whatever should more abate our attachment to the world than its instability. What happiness can we receive from, or what value should we put upon those possessions, which may be taken from us the next moment? The speedy, unexpected, and melancholy change, which often takes place from health to sickness, from wealth to poverty, from honour to contempt, I leave every hearer to meditate upon, from his own knowledge and observation of human life; only I cannot help mentioning to you the strong language of the holy scriptures, Prov. xxiii. 5. "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings, they fly away as an eagle towards heaven." But the circumstances upon this subject to which I would particularly and chiefly point your attention, is, that our possessions and enjoyments of every kind are under the immediate and constant direction of Divine Providence. Believe it, Christians, and remember it, the providence of God reaches to every event that befals you, however inconsiderable it may seem. It is God that "giveth you power to get wealth."—It is he by whom you are "diminished and brought low."—It is he "that raiseth up one, and putteth down another.—It is he that makes the "voice of joy and health" to be heard in your dwellings, or that "chastises you with pain, and the multitude of your bones with strong pain." If this is the case, what reason have you to be afraid of giving that

love and ſervice to any worldly enjoyment that is due to God? Will you "provoke him to jealouſy? are you ſtronger than he?" If you ſet your affections immoderately on any temporal poſſeſſion, he can immediately remove it, or turn it into gall and wormwood.

Inſtead of enumerating the ſeveral kinds of preſent enjoyments, I ſhall only mention one, the deſire of which is commonly very ſtrong, viz. children or poſterity. Now, how eaſily can a holy and righteous God take away the deſire of your eyes with a ſtroke! Nay, in how many inſtances is the life of children a heavier trial than their death itſelf! For I muſt ſay upon this ſubject, as I have ſaid often in your hearing, that to one that truly fears God, I do not know any temporal calamity equal to that of having profane or profligate children.

But perhaps ſome attentive hearer will heſitate a little, and ſay, 'I have not obſerved this to hold true in experience. Even pious perſons ſeem generally to bear the irregularities of their children, though ſome of them very ſcandalous, much better than their deaths. Neither is it unfrequent to ſee them excuſing or palliating the worſt practices, from the partiality of natural affection.' Perhaps, then, I muſt retract, or alter the aſſertion, and ſay, it is either the heavieſt trial, or the moſt dangerous temptation. But, after all, who can tell what floods of tears are ſhed in ſecret on this ſubject? Parents may be often obliged to conceal their ſorrow from the world, becauſe they know it would be treated with deriſion. I the rather incline to this ſuppo-

ſition in many caſes; for where indifference or partiality to the ſins of children is ſo plain that it cannot be denied, I ſhould greatly ſuſpect the piety of ſuch perſons, let the appearance or profeſſion be as flaming as it will.

All your mercies, then, are in the hand of God, who can give or with-hold, continue or withdraw them at his pleaſure. But there is ſomething more ſtill: your life itſelf is in his hand. Though outward things were ever ſo ſtable in themſelves, they are altogether precarious as to us. We know not what a day or a night may bring forth, or at what time our ſouls ſhall be required at our hands. This ſurely ought, and if it be ſeriouſly attended to certainly will, weaken our attachment to the things of a preſent world; according to the inference drawn from it by the apoſtle Paul, 1 Cor. vii. 29. 30. 31. "But this I ſay, brethren, the time is ſhort. It remaineth that both they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they poſſeſſed not; and they that uſe this world, as not abuſing it: for the faſhion of this world paſſeth away."

(3.) Conſider that there is really much more real ſatisfaction to be found in a crucified than in an idolized world. This to many will appear a contradiction; but it is a great and certain truth. It is impoſſible for any perſon to paſs ever ſo little the limits of duty in the uſe of the creatures, but it is to his own prejudice. This I do not mean only of its after conſequences, but even in point of preſent

comfort. There is a more genuine ſweetneſs in thoſe things that are uſed with moderation and ſelf-denial, as the goſpel requires, than in any ſinful gratification. But if this holds even with regard to the ſimple enjoyment, it holds much more ſtrongly when we conſider the benefit of a ſanctified world. He that, from a humble ſenſe of the divine mercies, can riſe to a grateful acknowledgement of the giver of all good; he who is thereby inſpired with a holy zeal to ſerve him in his generation, and values no temporal bleſſing, but ſo far as it may be uſeful in promoting the glory of God, and the good of others, has a delight from them, infinitely ſuperior to what ariſes from the licence of criminal indulgence. He enjoys his mercies without ſting, he poſſeſſes them without the fear of loſing them; nay, he can even rejoice in the ſurrender itſelf, as a part of the will of God. Is this fabulous, my brethren, or extravagant? I hope not. I believe and truſt it is matter of real experience to the children of God. Did the pſalmiſt David ſay, it was good for him that he was afflicted? did the apoſtles of Chriſt take joyfully the ſpoiling of their goods? did they rejoice that they were counted worthy to ſuffer ſhame for his name? I hope that many others will rejoice, that they have been enabled to uſe their ſubſtance in feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, and other uſeful purpoſes. I am perſuaded, that a pious and liberal mind taſtes a more exquiſite delight in relieving a poor family, than in the moſt coſtly and ſumptuous entertainment; and that he who values his reputation only for his uſefulneſs,

will give thanks to God for the eſteem in which he may be held; and when reproached for doing his duty, will have a pleaſure in ſubmitting to it without complaint, greater than the proud and ſelfiſh can poſſibly receive from the daily incenſe of flattery and praiſe.

4. In the *laſt* place, As this ſubject has the moſt intimate connection with the power of religion, I ſhall conclude with offering to ſerious perſons a few particular directions for their daily practice. (1.) Remember that your great care ought to be the one thing needful. Salvation is your great work, heaven is your home, the world is but your paſſage to it. If you can keep this conſtantly upon your minds, you will immediately perceive the danger of the world, as a temptation to ſin. You will not be able to forget, becauſe you will daily feel, what influence it hath in helping or hindering you in your journey heavenward. A traveller who hath his thoughts ſtill fixed on the place of his deſtination, and is anxious to get forward, will ſenſibly feel every incumbrance from the weather, or the way, by which his progreſs is retarded. It is by miſrepreſentation that the world leads us aſtray; true and juſt apprehenſions of our own ſtate, would keep our affections in their juſt meaſure with regard to it.

(2.) Be particularly upon your guard againſt the unſanctified uſe of lawful comforts. A perſon who hath any principle of conſcience, would be filled with horror at the thoughts of groſs ſin, ſuch as uncleanneſs, injuſtice, or ſenſuality; yet

ſuch may be in great danger of placing their affections upon the world, and reſting on it as their portion. Their houſes and lands, their children, their name and reputation, may incroach upon them, and uſurp dominion in their hearts. Be careful, therefore, habitually to improve theſe to the glory of God; learn to give him thanks for them, as the bleſſings of his providence, and to ſerve him by them, as they are talents or opportunities of uſefulneſs, for which you muſt render an account in the day of judgement.

(3.) Be attentive to the courſe of providence, and improve the characters and conduct of others to your own profit. If you ſee one man grow proud and ſelf-ſufficient as he grows rich, if you ſee him forgetful of God while he continues in proſperity, tyrannical to others becauſe they are in his power, then fear leſt you alſo be tempted. If you ſee wealth ſuddenly poured in upon any perſons make them anxious, quarrelſome, and impatient, then moderate your deſires of proſperity, and "be content with ſuch things as you have." It is very common to enumerate and cenſure the faults of others, that we may nouriſh our own pride by the compariſon; but it is infinitely more beneficial, to improve the weakneſs of others for our own humiliation. What is the ordinary ſtyle in converſation? 'Were I ſuch a perſon, had I his eſtate and poſſeſſions, I ſhould not grudge to be more liberal to the poor; I would do ſomething for the public; I would do every thing for my friends.' Truly you do not know what you would do. Were you raiſed

to the ſame ſituation, perhaps you would be ten times more proud and covetous than the man you blame. And as you would obſerve the ſins of others, ſo obſerve the ways of God towards them. If an oppreſſor is at laſt overtaken in his wickedneſs, if he is held as a wild bull in a net, and, inſtead of humility, it produceth nothing but the rage of impatience and deſpair; adore the righteous judgement of God, and be ſenſible that neither mercies nor trials will change the heart, unleſs they are accompanied with the power of divine grace. If it pleaſeth God to bring down any from riches to poverty, or from honour to diſgrace, remember that he viſits his people in mercy for their correction, and his enemies in vengeance for their puniſhment; ſo that, whether you are the one or the other, you have no charter of ſecurity from the ſame calamities.

(4.) Think much of mortality, and the innumerable ſufferings which are every where to be ſeen among our fellow-creatures. The wiſe man tells us, Eccleſ. vii. 2, 3. "It is better to go to the houſe of mourning, than to go to the houſe of feaſting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart. Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the ſadneſs of the countenance the heart is made better." There are ſome who, from mere tenderneſs of heart, and a ſtrong attachment to ſenſual delight, are not able to look upon ſcenes of miſery and diſtreſs. They fly from them, therefore, and deceive themſelves into a dream of ſecurity by intoxicating pleaſures. But, my bre-

thren, it is infinitely better to fortify yourſelves againſt the fear of death, by faith in him who is the reſurrection and the life; and then the frequent obſervation of others in affliction, will have the nobleſt and moſt ſalutary influence in mortifying worldly affections. You may alſo ſometimes ſee the triumph of faith in the joyful departure of believers, which is one of the moſt edifying and comfortable ſights that any Chriſtian can behold.

(5.) In the *laſt* place, I would recall to your minds, and earneſtly recommend to your meditation, what made a principal branch of the doctrinal part of this ſubject, "the croſs of Chriſt." By this the believer will indeed crucify the world. Reaſon and experience may wound the world, ſo to ſpeak; but the croſs of Chriſt pierces it to the heart. Shall we murmur at the croſs, when our Redeemer bore it? Are not the thoughts of what he ſuffered, and what we deſerved, ſufficient to eradicate from our minds every the leaſt inclination to what is provoking to him? Are not the thoughts of what he purchaſed ſufficient to deſtroy in our hearts the leaſt diſpoſition to place our happineſs here? The thoughts of the croſs of Chriſt are ſtrengthening as well as inſtructive. We are drawn as it were by the power of ſympathy, emboldened by his example, and animated by his conqueſt. Is not the Chriſtian, when he is in full contemplation of this great object, ſaying, 'O moſt merciful Saviour, ſhall I any more idolize that world which crucified thee? ſhall I be afraid of their ſcorn who inſulted thee? ſhall I refuſe any part of his will, who, by the croſs, has glorified thee.'

Let us conclude by attempting to ſay, in faith, what God grant every one of us may be able to ſay in the awful hour of the laſt conflict: "O death! where is thy ſting? O grave! where is thy victory! The ſting of death is ſin, and the ſtrength of ſin is the law; but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt."

SERMON XI.

FERVENCY AND IMPORTUNITY IN PRAYER.

GENESIS, xxxii. 26.

And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

MY brethren, real communion with God is a bleſſing of ſuch ineſtimable value, that it cannot be ſought with too great earneſtneſs, or maintained with too much care. If it is no fable, that God vouchſafes to his people, on ſome occaſions, a ſenſe of his gracious preſence, and, as it were, viſits them in love; with what fervour ſhould they deſire, with what diligence ſhould they improve, ſo great a mercy! In a particular manner, when a good man hath in view, either an important and difficult duty, or a dangerous trial, it is his intereſt to implore, with the greateſt importunity, the preſence and countenance of God, which only can effectually direct him in the one, and ſupport him in the other.

This, my brethren, ought to be our concern at preſent, as we have in view a very ſolemn approach to God, viz. laying hold of one of the ſeals of the covenant: what trials may be before us, or near us, it is impoſſible to know.

The words I have read relate to a remarkable paſſage of the patriarch Jacob's life. He was now returning from Padan-aram with a numerous family, and great ſubſtance, and had received information that his brother Eſau was coming to meet him with four hundred men. We are told, ver. 7. of the chapter, that he was "greatly afraid and diſtreſſed," being, in all probability, quite uncertain whether his brother was coming with a friendly or a hoſtile intention; or rather, having great reaſon to ſuſpect the latter to be the caſe. He roſe up, we are told, long before day, and ſent his wives, his children, and cattle, over the brook Jabbock: and, as it follows, in the 24th verſe, "Jacob was left alone: and there wreſtled a man with him, until the breaking of the day. And when he ſaw that he prevailed not againſt him, he touched the hollow of his thigh: and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wreſtled with him. And he ſaid, Let me go, for the day breaketh: and he ſaid, I will not let thee go, except thou bleſs me."

Some of the fathers, and alſo ſome of the Jewiſh writers, ſuppoſe, that all this was done in prophetic viſion, to repreſent to him the difficulties that were yet before him, which, by faith and patience, he was to overcome. But it is more reaſonable to think, that this was in truth the appearance of an angel to him; and indeed moſt probably of the

Angel of the covenant; becauſe, from the paſſage itſelf, it appears that he had "prevailed with God." The ſame thing we are aſſured of by the prophet Hoſea, chap. xii. 3. 4. "He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his ſtrength he had power with God; yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept and made ſupplication unto him: he found him in Beth-el, and there he ſpake with us." From this paſſage alſo we learn, that it was the ſame who met with him at Beth-el. Some think, with a good deal of probability, that this attack was made upon him by way of puniſhment for the weakneſs of his faith; that though he had received the promiſe, he ſhould yet be under ſo great a terror at the approach of his brother. In this, indeed, he was an example of what happens to believers in every age. Paſt mercies are forgotten at the approach of future trials; therefore the ſame God who viſited at Beth-el, and promiſed to be with him, now meets him in diſpleaſure, and threatens to deſtroy him: but by "weeping and ſupplication" he not only obtained his preſervation, but a further bleſſing. It is alſo the opinion of many, that the wreſtling or conflict was literal and real for ſome time, and that Jacob perhaps took it to be one of Eſau's attendants who had come to ſurpriſe him in the night; but that at laſt he perceived his miſtake, when the angel, by a ſlight touch of his thigh, ſhewed him, that, if he had pleaſed, he might eaſily have deſtroyed him. Then, as he had contended with his ſuppoſed adverſaries, he now continues the ſtruggle, by inſiſting upon a bleſſing; which he obtains, in ſuch

terms as carry in them a commendation both of his conſtancy and importunity: ver. 28. "And he ſaid, Thy name ſhall be called no more Jacob, but Iſrael: for as a prince haſt thou power with God, and with men, and haſt prevailed." The laſt part of this verſe is ſuppoſed, indeed, to be wrong tranſlated; and that it ſhould be, "as a prince thou haſt had power with God, and therefore much more ſhalt thou prevail over men;" which was a promiſe not only of preſent ſecurity, but of future proſperity and conqueſt.

But though this remarkable event had a particular and immediate relation to Jacob, there is no doubt, that the Spirit of God, in putting it on record, had a purpoſe of further and more extenſive uſefulneſs. It is plainly an example of importunity, and, as it were, holy violence in prayer. So uniform and general has this ſenſe of the paſſage been, that fervency and importunity in prayer has been generally called *wreſtling with God*. This is a ſubject which well deſerves our moſt ſerious attention; the rather that, I am ſorry to ſay, the practice has fallen into much diſrepute; and I am afraid the expreſſion itſelf is in ſome danger of being treated with deriſion. In diſcourſing further on this ſubject, I ſhall,

I. Explain and illuſtrate a little the nature and ſubject of this holy wreſtling and importunity in prayer.

II. The duty and reaſonableneſs of it.

III. The great benefit ariſing from it. And,

IV. In the *laſt* place, I ſhall make ſome improve-

ment of the ſubject, for your inſtruction and direction.

I. First, then, I am to explain and illuſtrate a little the nature and ſubject of this holy wreſtling and importunity in prayer. Wreſtling neceſſarily ſuppoſes ſome reſiſtance or oppoſition to be overcome. Prayer indeed, of itſelf, and in the ſimpleſt caſes, may be ſaid to carry this idea in it; becauſe he that prays ſtands in need of ſomething which he can only obtain by prevailing with, or bending the will of another to beſtow: Matth. vii. 7. "Aſk, and it ſhall be given you: ſeek, and ye ſhall find: knock, and it ſhall be opened unto you." But as there are many gracious aſſurances of God's readineſs to hear our prayers, the ſubject we are now upon leads us particularly to the conſideration of the obſtructions or difficulties that lie in the way, either of our praying as we ought, or praying with ſucceſs. Theſe two things muſt be joined together, becauſe they are in their nature inſeparably connected: James, iv. 3. "Ye aſk, and receive not, becauſe ye aſk amiſs, that ye may conſume it upon your luſts." James, i. 5. 6. 7. "If any of you lack wiſdom, let him aſk of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it ſhall be given him. But let him aſk in faith, nothing wavering: for he that wavereth is like a wave of the ſea, driven with the wind and toſſed. For let not that man think that he ſhall receive any thing of the Lord." Now, for the illuſtration of this duty and practice, in a way ſuited to the condition and daily experience of the children of God, I ſhall

mention ſome of the chief obſtructions or difficulties we have to wreſtle with in our acceſs to God, and which muſt be overcome by the importunity and holy violence of prayer.

1. The firſt of theſe I ſhall mention is a ſenſe of guilt overwhelming the ſoul. This, which is the ſtrongeſt of all arguments for the neceſſity of prayer, is often found in experience to hinder the performance. When any perſon is arreſted of conſcience, when his multiplied tranſgreſſions appear before him in all their variety, and in all their aggravations, it is apt to fill him with a jealouſy of God, a dread of entering into his preſence, and in ſome ſort a deſpair of obtaining his mercy. This hath been often ſeen in great profligates, overtaken by a viſitation of providence, and ſtung by the reproaches of conſcience. When they have been urged to apply for divine mercy, they have anſwered, 'I cannot pray;' or, 'How can I pray who have been ſo monſtrous a ſinner?' Nay, it may be frequently obſerved, that men who live in ſecurity, without any juſt conviction of their ſinful ſtate, will maintain ſome ſort of form of religion, will even go through their form with ſome pleaſure, and place ſome dependence upon it. But when conſcience begins to riſe a little upon them, and they ſee the enormities they are guilty of, though it cannot make them forſake their ſins, it makes them ſpeedily forſake all their religion. It is taken notice of by Dr Doddridge, in his life of Col. Gardiner, that when he was indulging himſelf in all manner of wickedneſs, he began, from a natural ſenſe of duty, to pay ſome acknowledgements

to God; but as he was not reſolved to forſake his ſins, the daring profanity of it ſtruck him with horror. He therefore determined, ſays the author, 'to make no more attempts of this ſort; and was perhaps one of the firſt that deliberately laid aſide prayer from ſome ſenſe of God's omniſcience, and ſome natural principle of honour and conſcience.' In this laſt reflection, the worthy author is undoubtedly miſtaken; for he was not the firſt, nor will he be the laſt, who has been driven from prayer by a ſenſe of ſin, and a horror of his Maker's preſence.

I have deſcribed this difficulty in its moſt hideous form, if may ſpeak ſo, as it ſtands in the way of wicked men. But there is often too much of it to be found even in good men themſelves. A deep ſenſe of ſin often fills them with a ſlaviſh fear, mars their confidence before God, and tempts them to keep at a diſtance from him: Pſ. xl. 12. "For innumerable evils have compaſſed me about, mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, ſo that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of mine head, therefore my heart faileth me." He that wreſtles in prayer, refuſes to yield to this diſcouragement. He ſtill ventures, though at a diſtance, to look to his offended God. Though he is filled with tribulation and fear, he will not give up his plea. He ſays, with the pſalmiſt, Pſ. lxxvii. 7. 8. 9. "Will the Lord caſt off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promiſe fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger ſhut up his tender mercies? Selah."

He endeavours to take such views of the glory and extent of divine mercy as will give him some ground of hope. He maketh supplication with strong crying and tears. Against hope he believeth in hope; or resolves, that if he perish, he shall perish at the footstool of mercy. And nothing is so proper to bring him to this resolution, nay, nothing is sufficient for that purpose, but the freeness of salvation, as it is offered in the gospel of Christ, where all confidence is derived, not from the goodness of the sinner, but from the power and grace of the Saviour.

2. Another difficulty to be overcome in prayer is, a frowning providence discouraging the mind. When this is added to the former, as they commonly go together, it augments the difficulty, and adds to the distress. When great calamities are brought upon the believer, when one stroke follows upon the back of another, when sin challenges, and Providence punishes him, he is then in danger of giving up his condition as desperate, and without remedy. See the reflections of Job in this strain, notwithstanding he is commended to us as a pattern of patience, Job, xix. 8. 9. 10. "He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass, and he hath set darkness in my paths. He hath stript me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head. He hath destroyed me on every side, and I am gone: and mine hope hath he removed like a tree."

When the rod of correction falls heavy, the Christian finds it very difficult to believe that it comes from the love of a father, and is rather apt to tremble under it as the severity of a judge. So did

Jacob himſelf, after all his experience, in the cloſe of life, Gen. xlii. 36. " And Jacob their father ſaid unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joſeph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all theſe things are againſt me." Sometimes the courſe of providence, in general, has the ſame effect. The proſperity and inſolence of ſinners, the oppreſſed ſtate of the children of God, the diſappointed endeavours of his ſervants, make them often call in queſtion his preſence, his faithfulneſs, or his power. This is the ſubject of the whole 73d pſalm, and ſummed up in the 10th and 11th verſes: " Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they ſay, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Moſt High?"

He that wreſtles in prayer, therefore, conſiders the depth of divine providence with reverence. He dwells upon the wiſdom and power of God, who alone can bring light out of darkneſs, and order out of confuſion. He taketh hold of his covenant, and the ſure and everlaſting mercy that is contained in it, and humbly and earneſtly prays for univerſal and abſolute reſignation to the divine will. This, my brethren, is one of the greateſt and moſt important objects of prayer, and what believers ſhould wreſtle for with the greateſt fervour and importunity. They ſhould cry mightily to God, and expoſtulate earneſtly with their own hearts, as the pſalmiſt, Pſal. xlii. 9. 10. 11. " I will ſay unto God my rock, Why haſt thou forgotten me? why go I mourning becauſe of the oppreſſion of the enemy? As with a ſword

in my bones, mine enemies reproach me: while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God? Why art thou cast down, O my soul! and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." I am not here to go through all the grounds of encouragement on which the suffering and pleading believer may place his dependence, drawn from the perfections of an unchangeable God, from the power of a Saviour upon a throne, from the precise and express promises in scripture of support or deliverance, and the daily experience of the faithful. It is sufficient that I have pointed out to you the state and practice of a distressed and afflicted Christian wrestling with God.

3. Another difficulty often arises from unbelieving thoughts, and inward temptations distressing the spirit. Prayer takes its rise from and is carried on by faith. Prayer, indeed, is little else than the immediate and lively exercise of faith: Heb. xi. 6. "For he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." On this account, dutiful and acceptable prayer is called the *prayer of faith*. Who would apply, or who can apply, to God, for any mercy, but from a persuasion, that he is present to hear, and that he is able and willing to bestow? Now, when this faith begins to fail, either from its natural weakness, from our sinful negligence, from the subtle insinuations, or the more violent assaults of the adversary of our salvation,

it muſt be a great hindrance to the exerciſe of prayer.

Many are the difficulties of this kind which the Chriſtian, from time to time, hath to ſtruggle with. Sometimes he is made to doubt of the certainty, and ſometimes of the meaning, of the promiſes. We ſee ſome diſtreſſed perſons ſo embarraſſed with ſcruples, or ſo miſled by controverſy, as to loſe the reliſh and ſpiritual comfort of the word of God, while they are contending about it. Sometimes they are made to doubt their own title to apply the promiſes, which appear like a rich and ſumptuous table, encompaſſed with a flaming ſword, forbidding their approach. Thus they are led away from the conſolation of Iſrael, and made to ſeek in vain for a foundation of comfort in themſelves. How often do we ſee, that the very ſenſe of ſin, and fear of danger, the very miſery and neceſſity which particularly diſcover the fitneſs and excellence of the truths of the everlaſting goſpel, are made uſe of to diſcourage us from embracing them!

Sometimes the truths themſelves are perverted, or ſet in oppoſition one to another, and mutually deſtroy each other's influence. Thus, while the conſtant and over-ruling providence of God ſhould be the great foundation both of our faith and prayer, it is ſometimes ſet in oppoſition to both. The falſe reaſoner will ſay to himſelf, 'Why ſhould I pray for deliverance from this diſtreſs? why ſhould I pray or hope for the poſſeſſion of ſuch a mercy? The whole order and courſe of events is fixed and unalterable. If it is appointed to happen, it ſhall happen, whether I ſpeak or be ſilent; if it is

otherwiſe determined, the prayers of the whole creation will not be able to obtain it.' How unhappily do men thus reaſon themſelves out of their own peace! not conſidering the unſpeakable abſurdity of making our weak and imperfect conceptions of the nature and government of God to ſtand in oppoſition to his own expreſs command. The influence of ſecond cauſes, moral as well as natural, is a matter of undeniable experience. If you ſhould acknowledge it in the one, ſhould you deny it in the other? Is not intemperance the cauſe of diſeaſe? is not ſlothfulneſs the way to poverty? is not neglected tillage the cauſe of a barren field? and is not reſtraining prayer alſo the way to barrenneſs of ſpirit? Believe it, my brethren, fervent prayer is as ſure and effectual a mean of obtaining thoſe mercies which may be lawfully prayed for, as ploughing and ſowing is of obtaining the fruits of the ground.

Again, ſometimes by the cunning of Satan, the believer is driven to the brink of the precipice, and made to doubt of the very being of God, and the reality of all religion. It is eaſy to ſee, that this muſt wholly take away the neceſſity and uſe of prayer. But even when it is not ſo powerful as to prevent the practice, yet doth it in a great meaſure cool the fervour and deſtroy the comfort of prayer. He that wreſtles with God has often theſe difficulties, in a greater or leſs degree, to ſtruggle with. Some of them it is his duty to oppoſe by reaſon, and ſome of them directly and immediately to reſiſt and baniſh as temptations; and I think an exerciſed Chriſtian will uſually make the matter

of his complaint the ſubject of his prayer. This is indeed defeating the tempter with his own weapons: it is bringing ſweetneſs out of the ſtrong, and meat out of the eater, when the difficulties thrown in the way of our prayers ſerve to excite us to greater ardour, importunity, and frequency in that neceſſary and profitable exerciſe.

Another difficulty with which the believer hath to ſtruggle, is the coldneſs and ſlothfulneſs of his own heart. This is as great a hindrance of prayer as any that hath been named; and I believe it is of all others the moſt common and prevalent. At the ſame time it affords a very mortifying view of our own character and ſtate. Strange indeed! that when we conſider the great and eternal God with whom we have to do, we ſhould find ſo much difficulty in maintaining a ſerious and attentive frame of ſpirit! that when we lie under ſo great and unſpeakable obligations to his mercy, our ſenſe of gratitude ſhould be ſo weak and languid! that when we have bleſſings to aſk of ſo ineſtimable value, we ſhould notwithſtanding do it with ſo much indifference! And, what is ſtranger ſtill, are there not many who have taſted, in ſome degree, the ſweetneſs and conſolation of communion with God, and yet are ready to return to a ſtate of coldneſs and negligence?

I am perſuaded I need not tell any ſerious perſon in this aſſembly the danger or frequency of the Chriſtian's being ſeized with a ſlothfulneſs, coldneſs, or ſecurity of ſpirit. It is probable many are at this moment inwardly aſhamed on being thus barely put in mind of it. How often is it the re-

proach and ſtain of all our worſhip, in public, in in family, and in ſecret! how eaſily do we degenerate into a form! how hardly is the ſpirit and affection kept alive! How many are there over whom conſcience has ſo much power, that they neither dare abſent themſelves from public ordinances, nor diſcontinue the form of ſecret duty; and yet they may continue long in a heartleſs, lifeleſs, and unprofitable attendance upon both! Times of deep conviction, of heavy affliction, or haraſſing temptation, are more diſtreſſing; but they are not ſo enſnaring, as this leproſy that creeps upon us in a ſeaſon of quiet and ſerenity. The other difficulties, if I may ſpeak ſo, force us to wreſtle with them, becauſe they leave us no peace; but this tempts us to ſit ſtill under it, becauſe it gives us no diſturbance.

He that wreſtles with God in prayer, then, muſt maintain a conflict with the ſlothfulneſs of his own ſpirit, and endeavour to preſerve that vigour and fervency of affection ſo neceſſary to the right performance of the duty. You will ſay, perhaps, With what propriety is this called wreſtling with God? it is rather wreſtling with himſelf. But when we conſider, that every gracious diſpoſition muſt come down from above, from the Father of lights, and author of every good and perfect gift; and, in particular, that the ſpirit of prayer is one of his moſt precious and excellent gifts; the juſtneſs and propriety of this language will manifeſtly appear. The coldneſs of our hearts, and deadneſs of our affections in worſhip, ought, on the one hand, to be imputed to ourſelves as the immediate and ſinful

cauſe, and, on the other, may be conſidered as a part of God's moſt holy providence, who withdraws his Spirit in righteous judgement. Thus the pſalmiſt very beautifully ſays, Pſ. lxv. 4. "Bleſſed is the man whom thou chuſeſt, and cauſeſt to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts." And thus the ſpirit of ſupplication is a remarkable goſpel-promiſe: Zech. xii. 10. "And I will pour upon the houſe of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, the ſpirit of grace and of ſupplications, and they ſhall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they ſhall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only ſon, and ſhall be in bitterneſs for him, as one that is in bitterneſs for his firſt-born."

My brethren, there is the greateſt reaſon for every Chriſtian, not only to wreſtle againſt a ſlothful diſpoſition as a ſin, but to fear its influence as a judgement; for if among ſpiritual judgements it holds a chief place, when God giveth "the ſpirit of ſlumber; eyes that they ſhould not ſee, and ears that they ſhould not hear; it ought to be treated in the ſame manner with all other obſtructions, that is to ſay, encountered by vigorous reſiſtance. Like all other enemies, it acquires courage by ſucceſs; like all other ſins, it is ſtrengthened by indulgence. And yet, alas! how often is this very circumſtance made uſe of as an excuſe for the omiſſion of prayer! When the Chriſtian finds himſelf lifeleſs and indiſpoſed to prayer, it makes him either neglect it altogether, or ſlur over the performance in a careleſs and trifling manner, ſaying to himſelf, 'I am not now in a fit temper for it.' Nay, ſometimes he reaſons himſelf even religiouſly out of his duty, ſaying,

'I shall but dishonour God by such a heartless sacrifice; and therefore I had better delay it till I be in a frame that is fitter for it.' But if the time and other circumstances call for the duty, our own indisposition of heart is, of all others, the most foolish and criminal excuse. How much better would it be to wrestle, as Jacob in the text, and insist upon the blessing; which cannot be more sensibly illustrated with respect to this particular branch, than by mentioning to you a resolution which an eminent Christian entered into for his own practice: That he would not be baffled by a treacherous spirit; for he would never give over the work of praise, till his affections were stirred, and he was brought to a sense of gratitude for divine goodness; and that he would never give over enumerating and confessing his sins, till his heart was melted in contrition and penitential sorrow!

5. I may mention one other difficulty with which we have to struggle in prayer, viz. when it pleases God to postpone, for a season, his compliance with our requests. Though his ears are always open to the cry of his people, he sometimes carries in such a manner as if they were fast closed against them. Though their petitions be offered up in faith, and on a subject agreeable to the will of God, they may not always be granted in the manner, in the measure, or in the season, that they themselves desire, or even in their imperfect judgement may think most proper. Many examples might be given of this. A minister praying for the success of his labours, may be heard in mercy, though it do not happen so soon, and though he cannot see it so clearly,

as it is natural for him to desire. He may have many seals of his ministry, although he meet with disappointment in some of those on whom he looked with the most favourable eye. A parent may pray for the salvation of his children, and his desires may have gone up with acceptance before the throne, although the accomplishment be yet far distant, and they seem, for the time, to increase unto more ungodliness. An afflicted person may have actually obtained the sanctified improvement of his affliction, although he cannot yet perceive the ends of divine providence in it, the comfortable discovery of which may be a feast reserved for him at some future season; or, in general, a mercy may be granted with advantage and increase, though it be suspended for a time.

In this interval, however, the Christian's eyes may be ready to fail with looking long: he may be in danger of ceasing his application, or abating his fervour, through despair of success. Therefore we have many exhortations in scripture to perseverance and importunity in prayer. We are exhorted to pray without ceasing, and to continue instant in prayer. Our Saviour, Luke, xviii. 1. spoke a parable on purpose to teach men, that they ought always to pray, and not to faint: Heb. x. 36. 37. "For ye have need of patience; that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry." Habakkuk, ii. 3. "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come,

it will not tarry." To which paſſage I ſhall only add, Lamentations, chap. iii. 25. 26. "The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the ſoul that ſeeketh him. It is good that a man ſhould both hope, and quietly wait for the ſalvation of the Lord."

I ſhall conclude this head by obſerving, that all theſe obſtructions are at the direction and diſpoſal of Providence, for the trial of the faith and patience of believers; and therefore their perſeverance under, and conſtancy in oppoſition to them, is, with great propriety, conſidered as an imitation of the patriarch Jacob in his wreſtling with God.

BEFORE proceeding to the remaining part of this ſubject, ſuffer me to make a practical improvement of what hath been already ſaid. And,

1. Let us hence learn the infinite grace and condeſcenſion of God, who not only admits his people to communion with him, but invites and encourages them to the moſt preſſing importunity, and even, to ſpeak ſo, to offer a holy violence to him. The reaſons of this will be more fully opened in the next diſcourſe. In the mean time, let us make it the ſubject of wonder and praiſe. Well may we ſay with Job, chap. vii. 17. 18. "What is man, that thou ſhouldſt magnify him? and that thou ſhouldſt ſet thine heart upon him? and that thou ſhouldſt viſit him every morning, and try him every moment?" This is the dignity of human nature indeed, not from what he is in himſelf, but what he may be by union with God through Chriſt; for through him we have all acceſs by one

Spirit unto the Father. And if nearneſs to God is ſo great a privilege, who would not covet it? who would not cultivate it? Surely all but thoſe who, to their final condemnation, diſbelieve and deſpiſe it.

2. Let us learn from what hath been ſaid, to defend the exerciſes of piety, and particularly this honourable privilege of the ſaints, from the ſcorn and reproach of the enemies of vital religion. I am abundantly ſenſible, that there are ſome, and ſome amongſt ourſelves, who treat this ſubject with contempt and diſdain, and look upon a believer's wreſtling with God in prayer, his being ſometimes in, and ſometimes not in a frame for his ſervice, as the raving and incoherent effuſions of weakneſs and enthuſiaſm. This is not only an evidence of their being themſelves ſtrangers to true religion, but is indeed directly contrary to ſound judgement and reaſon. I have laid down to you the meaning and ſubject of this wreſtling and importunity in prayer; and is there any thing more clearly founded upon truth, nature, and experience? Hear, ye unbelievers; might I not transfer every particular, and illuſtrate it in the intercourſe of man with man? If you had a favour to aſk of another, and were ſenſible that you had done him a great, recent, and unprovoked injury, would not this fill you with jealouſy? would it not keep you at a diſtance? would it not make you, as the common ſaying is, afraid to look him in the face? If he had carried himſelf as your enemy, and ſeemed, in many inſtances, to ſet himſelf in oppoſition to you; would not this give you even more than ſuſpicion and un-

certainty as to the iſſue of your application? If, by the ſuggeſtion of his enemies, you were made to believe him reſentful and implacable; would not this extinguiſh your hope, and break up all correſpondence? If your own heart were naturally too proud to intreat, or too careleſs to give attendance, would not the ſuit be neglected? Or if you had preſented your petition, and for a long tract of time no anſwer was returned; would you not give up all hopes of it as forgotten or rejected? Is not this an image of the ſtate of the Chriſtian in many inſtances? And therefore, if prayer is a part of natural religion, if it is a matter of duty or neceſſity at all, it muſt often have the above difficulties to overcome, and, on that account, be juſtly conſidered as a ſpecies of wreſtling with God. And why ſhould the Chriſtian's being in or out of frame for his duty to God, be made the ſubject of deriſion? Is there not ſomething ſimilar to it, as to every object of ſtudy or application? Are there not ſome ſeaſons when you ſay, your mind lies to your book, your work, or even your play, and then it goes on ſweetly and pleaſantly? Are there not others, when it is againſt the grain, and then every trifle is a difficulty, and even the air is a burden. If you conſider theſe things, you muſt be ſenſible, that all to whom eternity is the higheſt concern, and therefore religion their chief care, muſt be attentive to the ſtate of their hearts towards God. And if this is the caſe, every thing, whether inward or outward, that promotes or hinders their acquaintance with him, will appear to them of the utmoſt moment. The truth is, whoever

take the liberty to deſpiſe and ridicule the concern of ſerious perſons about communion with God, muſt excuſe me for ſaying, becauſe it is my deliberate judgement, either that they are enemies to religion in their hearts, or that they are wholly ignorant of the important ſubject.

3. As we would defend the duty above explained from the ſcoffs of infidels, let us alſo guard it from abuſe, and diſtinguiſh it from any corruption that may pretend, or may be thought to reſemble it. Particularly, let us beware of allowing in ourſelves, or approving in others, any groſs indecent familiarity, either of ſpeech or carriage. You ſee, my brethren, that wreſtling with God ariſes from a deep impreſſion of the infinite and unſpeakable importance of the bleſſings in proſpect, and their abſolute neceſſity to the petitioner. This will make him ſtill inſiſt, and urge his requeſt, and, as it were, refuſe to let go his hold. But it is alſo conſtantly attended with a ſenſe of the holineſs of God's nature, and the greatneſs of his power; which, when ſet home upon the wounded conſcience, is often the principal cauſe of the diſtreſs. Is there not, then, the juſteſt reaſon for earneſtneſs and concern? But is it not alſo plain, that this muſt preſerve the believer from impropriety; and that it cannot lead to any fooliſh or indecent familiarity, which is often miſtaken for it, and often reproached in its room?

What hath been ſaid upon the ſubject, I hope, will point out to you the juſt middle between every vicious extreme. Such real concern, ſuch fervour of ſpirit, will not indeed lead any to ſtudy in their prayers a nice, vain, or ornamented ſtyle. This

is the language of a mind at eaſe. It is but of little value at any rate: but O how miſplaced! O how unſuitable in prayer to God! This is beſt carried on by plain and ardent expreſſions of the very temper of the ſoul, when the fulneſs of the heart gives a ready utterance to the tongue. But neither will the views which the wreſtling believer hath of the glory and majeſty of God, of the ſtrictneſs of his law, and the terror of his wrath, ſuffer him to give way to any trifling, ſlovenly, or ridiculous manner of addreſſing himſelf to the throne of grace. It muſt be obſerved, indeed, that there will be a difference, according to the different circumſtances, ſtation, and capacity of the perſons concerned. There may be many a ſerious Chriſtian, who knows what it is to pour out his heart before God, and ſpread his ſins and ſorrows at his feet, who would not be fit for leading the devotion of a public or promiſcuous aſſembly; yet he may be the perſon who, as a prince, hath power with God, and prevails. The prayers of ſuch a wreſtler, with all the blemiſhes that attend them, are probably far more effectual, than thoſe of ſuch over-nice perſons, as deſpiſe the weakneſs of his underſtanding, or make themſelves merry with the homelineſs of his ſtyle: nay, I muſt ſay further, that we ſometimes meet with perſons whoſe language in prayer is ſo unſpeakably ſuperior to their abilities or performances of other kinds, as to ſhow that they have an unction from the Holy One; and that they are examples of the accompliſhment of that promiſe, Pſal. xxv. 14. "The ſecret of the Lord is with them

that fear him: and he will ſhew them his covenant."

4. I muſt conclude the ſubject at this time, with earneſtly exhorting you all to the diligent exerciſe of this duty. And that it may be the more diſtinct and effectual, I ſhall briefly point out to you the following objects of prayer.

1. Be fervent in prayer for the improvement of the ſpiritual life in your own ſouls. Prayer is at once the ſecurity and the comfort of a Chriſtian. Hate, fear, prevent as much as in you lieth, every thing that may obſtruct your regularity and earneſtneſs in this duty.

2. Be earneſt in your ſupplication, and importunate in your pleading for the church of Chriſt, and the glory of his kingdom, eſpecially in your native country. The character of real Chriſtians, in this reſpect, is well deſcribed by the prophet: If. lxii. 67. "I have ſet watchmen upon thy walls, O Jeruſalem, which ſhall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not ſilence; and give him no reſt, till he eſtabliſh, and till he make Jeruſalem a praiſe in the earth." The languiſhing ſtate of religion in this nation, and the threatening aſpect of providence, ſhould preſs us to this duty: and ſurely, in proportion as our belief of the truths of the goſpel is real and prevalent, we muſt behold tranſgreſſions with grief, and be ready to intercede for a "time of refreſhing from the preſence of the Lord."

3. Be earneſt for a ſeaſon of the power of God at this approaching communion. We ſerve an all-ſufficient and unchangeable God, the ſame yeſter-

day, to-day, and for ever, who is able to pour down his Spirit in a large and plentiful meaſure, and make it a happy time for the eſpouſal of many ſinners to Chriſt, and for edifying his ſaints, that they may go on their way rejoicing, and eat their bread with gladneſs and ſingleneſs of heart. Let us plead his own promiſe, Iſ. xliv. 3. 4. "For I will pour water upon him that is thirſty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy ſeed, and my bleſſing upon thine offspring: and they ſhall ſpring up as among the graſs, as willows by the water-courſes."

4. Pray for the miniſters of the goſpel. The apoſtles often aſk this aſſiſtance of the faithful: Col. iv. 3. "Withal, praying alſo for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to ſpeak the myſtery of Chriſt, for which I am alſo in bonds." If you believe the efficacy of prayer, you muſt be ſenſible that your diligence in this reſpect will prepare miniſters for you, and you for them. This is to point the eye of faith beyond the ſervants to the Maſter of the feaſt; and you will probably both look for and receive your anſwer from himſelf.

5. In the *laſt* place, I would earneſtly recommend to you the exerciſe of joint and ſocial conference and prayer. There is great danger of extinguiſhing the heavenly flame, if while you are neceſſarily ſurrounded with a flood of ungodly men, you do not often aſſociate with the excellent ones of the earth, and place your delight there: Malachi, iii. 16. "Then they that feared the Lord, ſpake often one to another, and the Lord hearken-

ed, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." There is a great advantage in ſociety for every purpoſe. If we know the benefit of united bodies for buſineſs and trade, if we find the pleaſure of joining together for mutual entertainment and ſocial converſe, muſt not as great a benefit reſult from a more ſacred union? Serious perſons, by aſſociating together, direct each other by their counſels, embolden each other by their examples, and aſſiſt each other by their prayers. There is alſo a particular promiſe of efficacy to ſocial prayer: Matth. xviii. 19. 20. "I ſay unto you, that if two of you ſhall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they ſhall aſk, it ſhall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midſt of them."

Now, may the Lord himſelf viſit you with his gracious preſence, and make you to ſay with Jacob at Bethel, Gen. xxviii. 16. 17. "And he ſaid, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and ſaid, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the houſe of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

SERMON XII.

FERVENCY AND IMPORTUNITY IN PRAYER.

GENESIS, xxxii. 26.

And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

SECOND SERMON ON THE TEXT.

II. WE proceed now to the *second* thing propoſed in the diſtribution of the ſubject; which was, To ſhow you the duty and reaſonableneſs of wreſtling and importunity in prayer. Here I am ſenſible, that a corrupt and impatient mind may be able to muſter up objections againſt it. There is ſomething wonderful and unſearchable in all the works of God, and in none more, as it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe, than in the methods of his grace. In particular, it may appear ſurpriſing, that he ſhould exerciſe his people with ſuch conflicts and trials, that it ſhould be neceſſary to overcome him, as it were, by importunity, before we can obtain thoſe bleſſings which himſelf hath commanded us

to ask, and which he hath promised to bestow. 'Why,' will it be said, 'does a God of mercy, and of infinite fulness, to whom all our wants and weaknesses are perfectly known, wait for our prayers, before he will part with what is so much needed by us? Why doth he, who knoweth our frame, and remembers that we are dust, unnecessarily throw obstructions in our way, and wrap himself up in darkness, to discourage our approach?'

But how does this surprise increase, when we consider how unequal we are for the conflict, if no strength but our own is opposed to the Almighty! nay, that our strength for resistance must come only from himself: so that he wounds, and he heals; he oppresses, and he sustains; he discourages, and he invites. It is by prayer that we must obtain every blessing from the Father of lights; and one of the greatest and most necessary of these blessings is the spirit of prayer itself. My brethren, when either unbelief or profanity moves any such difficulties as these, I think it my duty to call upon you, in the first place, to bow yourselves before the sovereignty of God. There is an unsearchable impenetrable depth in the divine wisdom, whether we look upon the works of nature, or of grace. As creator of the world, he could, no doubt, in a moment, with one word of his power, have raised the whole fabric in perfection; yet it pleased him in a gradual manner to finish every part by the addition of another, for the space of six days. When he gave the first promise to Adam, or when he renewed it to the father of the faithful, he could, no doubt, have sent the Saviour into the world, to finish transgression,

and make an end of ſin; yet he ſaw it proper to give only diſtant intimations of this bleſſed period, and to defer the long-expected appearance till the fulneſs of time, while the nations were ſuffered to ſit for many ages in darkneſs, and in the region and ſhadow of death. In the ſame manner he often takes a variety of ſteps with his people before they are made partakers of his promiſes.

But notwithſtanding that ſomething muſt ſtill remain myſterious, and beyond the comprehenſion of a finite creature, in the management of God, who "giveth not account of any of his matters," we may ſee much propriety and beauty in this part of his procedure. And is it not our duty to attend to it? We may ſee the reaſonableneſs, nay, we may perceive the wiſdom, of his requiring a holy fervency, wreſtling, and importunity in prayer: for it ſerves to engrave upon our hearts, and even to work into our affections, ſome of the moſt important truths of religion, and ſuch as will have the moſt powerful and extenſive influence upon our temper and practice. This will plainly appear from the three following conſiderations.

1. Fervency of ſpirit, and importunity in prayer, is ſuitable and neceſſary, becauſe of the greatneſs and glory of that God with whom we hold communion, as well as it ſerves to ſtrengthen and improve the ſenſe of this upon our minds. The infinite majeſty of God, and the unmeaſurable diſtance at which he is removed from all created weakneſs, is often ſpoken of in ſcripture with admiration of his condeſcenſion: Pſal. viii. 3. 4. "When I conſider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon

and the ſtars which thou haſt ordained; what is man that thou art mindful of him? and the ſon of man that thou viſiteſt him?" Under a deep impreſſion of the ſame great truth, Solomon ſays, 2 Chron. vi. 18. "But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much leſs this houſe that I have built?" Is not, then, ſome fervour of affection due to the greatneſs and glory of that God whom we worſhip? Our affections ſhould always, in their ſtrength and exertion, be in proportion to their object, its dignity and worth. Indifference and careleſsneſs in an inferior towards a ſuperior is always counted a mark of diſdain. We naturally ſuppoſe that thoſe in great and high ſtations ought to be approached with reverence, and ſolicited in the humbleſt manner, by their inferiors, who hope to ſhare in their bounty; and the more exalted the perſon, the more ſubmiſſive the poſture, and the more earneſt the ſupplication. Much more ought this to take place between God and us. On this account it is, probably, at leaſt on this amongſt others, that indifference and coldneſs in religion is repreſented as peculiarly the object of divine deteſtation: Rev. iii. 15. 16. "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, becauſe thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will ſpue thee out of my mouth."

2. Our own great unworthineſs, who are the objects of divine love, and admitted to this ſacred intercourſe, ſhould powerfully excite us to fervency in pleading. This is preciſely a counterpart to the

former conſideration, and greatly ſtrengthens the concluſion. Even the higheſt of the ſpirits above, moſt eminent in knowledge and ſanctity, who ſtand neareſt to the throne of God, we are told, cover their faces with their wings, as loſt in reſpect and wonder, when they look to him who dwells in inacceſſible light. How much more "man, who is a worm, and the ſon of man, who is a worm, whoſe foundation is in the duſt, who dwells in houſes of clay, and is cruſhed before the moth!" Accordingly, in ſome of the examples we have of the moſt importunate pleading and wreſtling in prayer, this is the very difficulty which ſeems to ſtand in the way, and requires the greateſt efforts of holy boldneſs to overcome; as in the account we have of Abraham's interceſſion for devoted Sodom, Gen. xviii. 27. "And Abraham anſwered and ſaid, Behold now, I have taken upon me to ſpeak unto the Lord, who am but duſt and aſhes." And again, in the 32d verſe, "And he ſaid, O let not the Lord be angry, and I will ſpeak yet but this once: Peradventure ten ſhall be found there. And he ſaid, I will not deſtroy it for ten's ſake."

But, my brethren, I beſeech you remember, it is not our frail nature, and limited powers only, that point out our unworthineſs; but our guilt and impurity, ſo oppoſite and ſo odious to the divine nature. This, I have ſhewn you in the preceding diſcourſe, is one of the greateſt hindrances of our acceſs to God in prayer. And may we not ſay, How ſuitable, how neceſſary is it, that, in order to keep us ſtill deeply humble, God ſhould ſometimes cover himſelf with a cloud, and exerciſe the ſinner

with ſtrong crying and tears, before he will vouchſafe the intimations of his love? This reaſon will be felt, and that the moſt ſenſibly, by the beſt and moſt dutiful of his children, as their ſanctification continues imperfect ſo long as they are here below. How ſhould a ſenſe of guilt and miſery at once increaſe our ſelf-abaſement, and add to the earneſtneſs of our deſires! There cannot be a juſter deſcription, both of our ſtate and duty, where miſery and weakneſs conſpire in ſhewing the neceſſity and difficulty of wreſtling with God, than the apoſtle hath given us, Rom. viii. 26. "Likewiſe the Spirit alſo helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we ſhould pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itſelf maketh interceſſion for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

3. The duty and reaſonableneſs of wreſtling and importunity in prayer, appears from the ineſtimable value of the mercies to be obtained. Should there not be a proportionable ſtrength of deſire to the worth of the bleſſings in proſpect? Now, who can compute the value of the divine favour, and all its happy effects? and therefore who can compute the guilt of indifference, and the neceſſity of fervour in aſking it? The bleſſings of ſalvation in general are in their nature and ſource unſpeakable, and in their duration without end.—On the one hand, deliverance from everlaſting miſery, from the wrath of an almighty and incenſed God. True it is, that thoſe who are but yet in the way muſt be very unable to form juſt conceptions of this. But we may in general conclude, from the glory of creating power, which is in ſo many inſtances diſplayed be-

fore our eyes, how fearful a thing it muſt be to be the monuments of the vengeance of ſuch a God. He who is mighty to make and ſave, is alſo mighty to deſtroy. This is particularly felt by the ſinner, when humbled by conviction; and in every inward conflict there is a repetition of the ſame diſtreſs, as it ariſes from the ſame cauſe.

On the other hand, what muſt be the value of everlaſting happineſs in the preſence and the enjoyment of God! How bleſſed, beyond expreſſion, muſt the believer be, when the fulneſs of the divine benignity, of which we have now acceſs to taſte only ſome ſmaller and more diſtant ſtreams, ſhall be the portion of the ſoul! What ſupplications ſhould we not make, when we are aſſured, that importunity may obtain ſo rich a treaſure! And let me add, how valuable preſent fellowſhip and communion with God, which is the earneſt and foretaſte of complete deliverance from the one, and the eternal unchangeable poſſeſſion of the other! Say now, my brethren, is it not juſt and reaſonable, that theſe bleſſings ſhould be deſired with ardour, and ſought with importunity? What fervent language have we from the ſcripture-ſaints upon this ſubject! Pſal. xlii. 1. 2. "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, ſo panteth my ſoul after thee, O God. My ſoul thirſteth for God, the living God: when ſhall I come and appear before God?" Pſal. lxiii. 1. 2. "O God, thou art my God, early will I ſeek thee: my ſoul thirſteth for thee, my fleſh longeth for thee in a dry and thirſty land, where no water is; to ſee thy power and thy glory, ſo as I have ſeen thee in the ſanctuary." Is it any won-

der that there ſhould be often trials and conflicts in the way to ſo honourable a relation, and ſo happy a ſtate? What is cheaply obtained is commonly eſteemed of little worth. Is it to be expected, then, that God ſhould proſtitute the bleſſings of his love to cold and diſdainful petitions, to lukewarm and indifferent petitioners? And are there not, alas! too many who "aſk and have not, becauſe they aſk amiſs," who, by their feeble and heartleſs demands, do juſtify, and, if I may uſe ſuch an expreſſion, even ſolicit a refuſal?

III. We proceed to the *third* thing propoſed in the method; which was, To point out the great advantages which flow from wreſtling with God. Theſe, in conſequence of what hath been already ſaid, may be conſidered as all centering in one point, viz. its power and efficacy in procuring the bleſſings. Nothing can be ſaid ſtronger on the benefit of wreſtling with God, than that we ſhall aſſuredly prevail. The ſucceſs of Jacob's wreſtling is recorded in the paſſage immediately following the text, ver. 27. 28. 29. "And he ſaid unto him, What is thy name? And he ſaid, Jacob. And he ſaid, Thy name ſhall be called no more Jacob, but Iſrael: for as a prince haſt thou power with God and with men, and haſt prevailed. And Jacob aſked him, and ſaid, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he ſaid, Wherefore is it that thou doſt aſk after my name? and he bleſſed him there." But that I may illuſtrate this a little in a practical manner, obſerve, that the efficacy of wreſtling with God in prayer appears from the three following conſiderations.

1. It prepares and disposes the people of God for receiving his mercies, and in some cases is itself the actual possession of them. Every part of the divine conduct towards his saints is full of wisdom, and full of grace. One reason why he who knows our wants, requires us to pray, is, that we may be prepared for a profitable supply. We may also rest assured, that he will not delay his interposition one moment beyond the fittest season. Now, that ardent prayer, wrestling, and importunity with God, is the best preparation for receiving his mercies, is plain, both in respect of worth and capacity. It may seem indeed improper to speak of any fitness as to worth for receiving the divine mercies, which are all free and unmerited on our part, however dearly purchased on the part of our Surety. But, my brethren, with due caution, we may also take in this consideration, the rather that it is in the exercise of prayer that this fitness is obtained; which plainly shews, that it cometh from God, that it is his own gift, and his own work. Is not that person the fitter for deliverance from distress of any kind, and for the communications of divine favour, who is wholly emptied of himself, truly and deeply humbled, brought prostrate before the Divine Majesty, convinced and satisfied of the vanity of all created enjoyments, and breathing after God, as his sole refuge and consolation, which he will not, and cannot forego?

May we not also say, that he is much more fit than one, on the other hand, who flies from God with impatient complaints, or sullen disdain; or who, without asking help from above, when one

earthly comfort fails him, cleaves the closer to another? The great, if not the only end of divine correction, is, to weaken the power of sin, to make us feel the vanity of the creature, and to break every attachment to the world that is inordinate and excessive. When this end is obtained, therefore, must not the rod be withdrawn? and will not this promise be certainly accomplished? that the Lord "will appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified," Is. lxi 3. If we look into the scripture-qualifications for receiving the communications of divine love, we shall find the chief of them to be, the earnestness of our own desires: Is. lv. 1. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price."

Further, wrestling and importunity in prayer gives a capacity of relishing the mercies of God. They are then, and not till then in the same degree, truly mercies, earnestly desired, infinitely prized. It is a common and beaten remark, That the worth of any mercy is never known till we are deprived of it. There is great access to observe this in the Christian life, not only in its beginning, but in ever step of its progress. O how refreshing is the intimation of pardon to a convinced sinner, who hath long trembled through fear of wrath; or to the believer, who hath long groaned under a spirit of bondage! O how ravishing is a sense of divine love to that child

of God who hath long complained of the hiding of his Father's face! When, after he hath been loſt on a ſea of temptations, one wave or billow following cloſe upon the back of another, he is at laſt received into a peaceful haven; the *everlasting arms* are ſtretched round about him, the *faithfulness of God* is his ſhield and buckler, and the ſtrength of the *Almighty* his impregnable ſecurity? There is no ſuch ſtayedneſs or compoſure of mind as after a variety of trials. The exerciſed Chriſtian has tried and thrown away every broken reed, one after another; he hath found the vanity of every refuge of lies; and hath ſettled his hope on the immoveable foundation of the Rock of ages, which ſhall never fail.

I added, in entering on this particular, that wreſtling and importunity in prayer is in many caſes itſelf the poſſeſſion of the very mercies we deſire. It is the exerciſe of almoſt every gracious diſpoſition. To increaſe in ſanctification, to have his graces ſtrengthened, and his corruptions ſubdued, is the habitual and prevailing deſire of every real believer. But how can this be more effectually obtained than by fervent prayer? How, and where, can any gracious diſpoſition be either more improved and ſtrengthened, or more clearly diſcerned, than when it is in exerciſe? Faith, love, penitential ſorrow, truſt, and reſignation, are the very diſpoſitions eſſential to a wreſtling believer. Perhaps ſome will ſay, True indeed; but they are only attempting to ſhew themſelves, often diſcovering their weakneſs, ſometimes yielding to their oppoſites. 'Alas!' ſays the Chriſtian, 'my faith is often

over-matched with unbelief, and my love contradicted by impatient complaints: what is my penitential sorrow but weeping over a hard heart? my trust and resignation is but a short-lived promise: in a little time my courage fails, and I am ready to tremble at the falling of a leaf.' But, my dear brethren, is not the importunate wrestler maintaining the conflict, instead of yielding to the stream? and how infinitely preferable are his hours of deepest anguish to that slothful and unequal conduct to be observed in many secure and formal Christians! It is also certain, that many times deliverance comes unlooked for. As the psalmist says, that whilst he was musing the fire burned; so it frequently happens, that a gracious God visits distressed souls, even when they least expect it, with the joy of his salvation, and causeth the bones which he hath broken to rejoice.

2. The efficacy of importunate prayer appears from the promises of success which are annexed to it in scripture. I must here begin by observing, that there are many commands in the word of God to pray, to pray without ceasing, to continue instant in prayer. Now, every command to pray contains in it a promise of a gracious answer from the Hearer of prayer. It necessarily implies it. The truth of God is a pledge and security for it. He would not deceive us with vain hopes, or put us upon a fruitless attempt: for he is not a man, that he should lie. But besides this general consideration, there are many express promises, particularly, to the earnestness and importunity of the desire: Prov. ii. 3. 4. 5. "Yea, if thou criest after know-

ledge, and lifteſt up thy voice for underſtanding: if thou ſeekeſt her as ſilver, and ſearcheſt for her as for hid treaſures: then ſhalt thou underſtand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." See alſo the parable of the importunate widow, and the unjuſt judge, Luke, xviii. 1. which concludes thus, ver. 7. "And ſhall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?"

Let me beg your attention to another paſſage recorded in the 17th chapter of Matthew, where there was brought to our Saviour a poſſeſſed perſon, whom his diſciples could not cure: ver. 19. 20. 21. "Then came the diſciples to Jeſus apart, and ſaid, Why could not we caſt him out? And Jeſus ſaid unto them, Becauſe of your unbelief: for verily I ſay unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of muſtard-ſeed, ye ſhall ſay unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it ſhall remove; and nothing ſhall be impoſſible unto you. Howbeit, this kind goeth not out, but by prayer and faſting." This paſſage is ſomewhat remarkable, and entirely to our preſent purpoſe. It ſhews, that in the œconomy of divine grace, there are ſome mercies that may be obtained by leſs, and ſome that require more earneſt and fervent prayer. This ſpecies of devils, it ſeems, would not yield to the ſame influence that others did. See only further, James, v. 16. "Confeſs your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed: The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

3. In the *last* place, The ſame thing appears from the daily experience of the people of God, and many memorable examples of the efficacy of prayer. I might cite a great number of theſe to you from the holy ſcriptures, which are not only a ſacred repoſitory of divine truth, but a hiſtory of divine providence. You may take the few following inſtances. Abraham's interceſſory prayer for Sodom, in which that ancient patriarch, honoured with the glorious title of the *friend of God*, was allowed to plead with him, to repeat and urge his requeſt, as well as to ſtrengthen it with arguments. It is true, it ſaved not the whole city from deſtruction; yet was it heard in every part of it, according to its tenor. Nay, even though the ten righteous, which was his loweſt ſuppoſition, were not found in it; yet the few righteous that were there, were not involved in the general calamity, but ſuffered to eſcape. Take alſo the example of Elias, as cited by the apoſtle James, chap. v. 17. 18. "Elias was a man ſubject to like paſſions as we are, and he prayed earneſtly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the ſpace of three years and ſix months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." See the caſe of Daniel, recorded in the 2d chapter of that book, particularly the 17th, 18th, 19th verſes of that chapter, where you will learn, that, by the united prayer of Daniel and his companions, the ſecret of the king's dream was communicated to them in a revelation from heaven. I only add the inſtance recorded Matth. xv. 21. and downwards, where the woman of Canaan ſo

importunately preſſes her requeſt, and at laſt receives this anſwer: ver. 28. "Then Jeſus anſwered and ſaid unto her, O woman! great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour."

I might eaſily mention many more recent examples of the efficacy of prayer; but thoſe which have been already produced are abundantly ſufficient. The truth is, I am perſuaded that every ſerious Chriſtian is able to recollect examples of it from his own experience; and ſurely they are of all others moſt inexcuſeable, who reſtrain prayer before God, after they have known the unſpeakable benefit which flows from it.

IV. Let us now make ſome practical improvement of what hath been ſaid on this ſubject. And,

1. Suffer me to improve what hath been ſaid, for the conviction and reproof of thoſe who are habitually unmindful of this important duty. Alas! my brethren, what reaſon have we to complain of the neglect of wreſtling, and want of importunity in prayer! Is not the language itſelf become unfaſhionable, and liable to ſcorn? As a perſon as eminent in ſtation as in piety once ſaid, 'Men have now deviſed a ſmooth and eaſy way to heaven, quite conſiſtent with the ſpirit of the world, in which temptations and ſpiritual conflicts, and inward trials, are unknown.' But be aſſured, however changeable we are in our fancy and inclination, the word of God abideth for ever. There is very great reaſon to fear, nay there is good ground to affirm, that thoſe who are ſtrangers to wreſtling

with God in prayer, are ſleeping in ſecurity, and under the dominion of ſin. You will ſay perhaps, you live at eaſe, and undiſturbed. It may be ſo, and it is ſo much the worſe; for the prince of this world will always conſult the peace and quietneſs of his own ſubjects.

I would earneſtly entreat every hearer of the goſpel to ſuffer this reproof to enter into his mind, as it is what can be certainly known only to God and your own ſouls. Though there is ſufficient outward evidence of the general neglect of this duty, how any perſon is particularly guilty, muſt be left to the determination of his own conſcience, and the judgement of him who ſeeth and ſearcheth the heart. If there is any among you who habitually deſpiſeth prayer, who makes every little buſineſs, every little indiſpoſition or lazineſs of mind, an excuſe for neglecting or poſtponing it; if there are any who ſatisfy themſelves with a dead curſory formality in duty; who call in queſtion the reality of communion with God in others, becauſe they are ſtrangers to it themſelves; without all doubt they have great cauſe to fear, that they are in the gall of bitterneſs, and in the bond of iniquity. Tell me, what is the reaſon of your backwardneſs to drawing near to God? Is it not, that you are afraid of coming into his preſence? Is it not, that you cannot bear the opening of your hearts? Is it not from ſome dark jealouſy and ſuſpicion that all is not right with you, though you had rather cover than confeſs it. My earneſt prayer to God is, that though you keep at a diſ-

tance from him, he may not keep at a diſtance from you; that he may, by his Spirit, convince you of your danger, and, in great mercy, deliver you from this miſerable ſtate.

2. You may learn, from what has been ſaid, one great cauſe of the low ſtate of religion, and the barrenneſs of ordinances among us at preſent. It is the neglect of prayer, and that many, though they may condeſcend to aſk, yet do not think it worth their while to wreſtle for the bleſſing. The profane are not the only perſons juſtly chargeable with a failure in this part of their duty. Many real Chriſtians are apt to ſlacken their diligence in this important exerciſe, and many often read their ſin in their puniſhment. But is it not very wonderful, my brethren, that thoſe who have once taſted that the Lord is gracious, who have known the ſweetneſs of communion with God, ſhould ever loſe it by their own indifference and backwardneſs to maintain it? Yet here we muſt, of neceſſity, lay the blame. We muſt ſtill ſay, in juſtification of his procedure, If. lix. 1. 2. "Behold, the Lord's hand is not ſhortened, that it cannot ſave: neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have ſeparated between you and your God, and your ſins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." It ſeems to appear from the experience of Chriſtians, that God is jealous of their treatment of his love, and deeply reſents the alienation of their affections; and therefore, to have ſenſible joy in him, and to walk in the comfort of the Holy Ghoſt, which is ſo great a privilege, can-

not be preſerved, without the greateſt watchfulneſs on their part, and the greateſt conſtancy in prayer.

3. Suffer me now, in a few words, to exhort every perſon in this aſſembly, and in particular thoſe who have ſo lately renewed their engagement to God, over the ſymbols of the broken body and ſhed blood of Chriſt, to give themſelves unto prayer. Of what uſe is your being admitted to this ſacred table, if it do not incline you to live nearer to God in the habitual tenor of your life? This is the very privilege which we obtain by the blood of Chriſt, that we have acceſs with boldneſs and confidence through the faith of him. This is the very advantage that we obtain by his continual interceſſion before the throne, Heb. iv. 14. 16. "Seeing, then, that we have a great high-prieſt, that is paſſed into the heavens, Jeſus the Son of God, let us hold faſt our profeſſion. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Again, have you not devoted your lives to the ſervice of God? have you not promiſed to keep his commandments? How do you expect to fulfil your promiſe? Are you not ready to ſay, 'Not unleſs he be pleaſed himſelf to preſerve and keep me; not unleſs he put his Spirit within me, and write his laws in my heart?' And do you not know, that he hath ſaid, "Yet for all theſe things will I be inquired of by the houſe of Iſrael to do it for them?" I will aſk you one queſtion more. Do you not know that you are yet in an evil world? Do you not know what variety of temptations and ſufferings you may yet be expoſed to? How ſhall

you bear up under trials, how ſhall you "glorify God in the day of viſitation," if you live habitually at a diſtance from him? Chriſtians, it is to him you muſt look when trouble cometh upon you. All other refuge will ſoon fail, and vanity, vanity, be ſeen written upon the creature. But with what confuſion muſt you then lift up your eyes to him, if you forget him in proſperity! Therefore let me beſeech you, in the moſt earneſt manner, to renew your diligence in the exerciſe of prayer. In a particular manner, I muſt recommend this exerciſe to young perſons. You, my dear brethren, are expoſed to many dangers, your ſtrength ſmall, your experience little, your knowledge imperfect. Live a life of prayer, and dependence upon God. Daniel and his companions were young perſons, yet mighty in prayer; therefore learn it early, practiſe it diligently, and wait upon it habitually and conſtantly. Hear what the prophet ſays in commendation of it, If. xl. 29. 30. 31. "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might, he increaſeth ſtrength. Even the youths ſhall faint and be weary, and the young men ſhall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord ſhall renew their ſtrength: they ſhall mount up with wings as eagles, they ſhall run and not be weary, and they ſhall walk and not faint."

4. I ſhall conclude the ſubject, by giving you two or three directions for the preſervation and improvement of the ſpiritual life; and particularly for enabling you to perſevere with uniformity and comfort in the exerciſe of prayer.

1. Be watchful and circumſpect in the whole of your converſation. Let it be your great aim, to keep conſciences void of offence towards God and towards man. Prayer and watchfulneſs have a reciprocal influence upon one another. Neglect of prayer will make you yield to temptation, and the indulgence of ſin will make you afraid to pray. But habitual watchfulneſs will carry you with comfort to God, at the hour of prayer, both in thankfulneſs for paſt mercies, and reliance on him for future ſtrength.

2. Obſerve with attention the courſe of his providence towards you. Enumerate his mercies to you in proſperity, adore his righteous will in adverſity. Let this be the work, not only of particular ſeaſons, but of every day. This will at once ſhew you the neceſſity, and abundantly ſupply the matter of prayer. If you do otherwiſe, you will go to prayer without any clear and determinate views of what you are to pray for, and then it is no wonder that it degenerate into a lifeleſs form. Once more,

3. Be much employed in interceſſion for others. This noble teſtimony of Chriſtian love has the moſt powerful influence in warming the heart, and enlivening the affections in prayer. It happens frequently, that thoſe who have hardly a word to ſay for themſelves, and whoſe deſires are quite heavy and languid as to what regards their own intereſt, no ſooner come to ſupplicate for others, than they are enabled to pour out their whole ſouls before God with the greateſt fulneſs of expreſſion, and enlargement of affection; as if it were the pur-

pose of God to invite us to this exercise by honouring it with a particular mark of his acceptance and approbation. O that it would please God to revive among professing Christians a spirit of prayer; that when they cannot unite in sentiment, they may unite in prayer; that when impiety and immorality are bold and insolent, they may oppose them by prayer; and that when they are slandered, insulted, or abused by their enemies, they may find unspeakable comfort in imitating their dying Saviour, loving them that hate them, blessing them that curse them, and praying for them who despitefully use them and persecute them. I conclude with the words of the apostle Jude, ver. 24. 25. "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

SERMON XIII.

OBEDIENCE AND SACRIFICE COMPARED.

1 SAMUEL, XV. 22.

Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice; and to hearken, than the fat of rams.

THAT obedience is due to God from all his intelligent creatures, I ſuppoſe none here preſent will deny. It is the original unchangeable law of creation, which every after diſcovery ſerved not to undermine, but to ſupport and confirm. It was the religion of man in his primitive ſtate of innocence; and it ſhall be the religion of heaven, when we ſhall ſee our Maker as he is. The very excellence of truth itſelf lies in its influence on holineſs, and the very purpoſe of every ſacred inſtitution is to form our minds to a habit of obedience, and ſubjection to the will of God.

In the mean time, it is of the utmoſt moment, that we have clear and juſt conceptions of the nature and principles of obedience, and that we guard

againſt the errors that are often committed on this ſubject. Some, from a partial or exceſſive attachment to one branch of duty, are apt to diſparage another; and ſome are apt to make a merit of their zeal or diligence in one duty, as if it would procure indulgence for them in the wilful neglect of another. From the language in the remarkable paſſage of ſcripture which I have choſen for my text, it is plain, that ſacrifices, or the outward worſhip of God, are ſometimes made a cover for the neglect of obedience. Nor are there wanting other paſſages where complaints are brought againſt the ſame miſtake. On the other hand, this paſſage where the text lies, and another expreſſion akin to it in the goſpel, "I will have mercy, and not ſacrifice," have been often groſsly miſapplied, to bring contempt upon every poſitive inſtitution, and even upon the whole exerciſes of piety; and that by ſuch perſons as do very little honour, either to themſelves or their opinions, by the perfection of their obedience. I have choſen theſe words, with a view to the information and conviction of both theſe ſorts of perſons, and for the inſtruction and edification of thoſe who deſire to walk in the ſtraight path of duty, without turning to the right hand or to the left. In diſcourſing further upon them, I propoſe,

I. To open a little, and make a few remarks on the hiſtory which gave occaſion to the words of the prophet.

II. To ſhew in what reſpects it is that obedience is oppoſed and preferred to ſacrifice, or juſtly called *better*, as in the words of the text.

III. In the laſt place, To make ſome application of the ſubject.

I. First, then, I am to open a little, and make a few remarks upon the hiſtory which gave occaſion to the words of the prophet. This will be the more proper, that the ſetting this part of the ſacred ſtory in a clear light, will both afford us ſome excellent inſtructions, and alſo obviate the cavils of unreaſonable men. The people called *Amalekites* were derived and had their name from one *Amalek*, the ſon of Eſau's eldeſt ſon, Eliphaz, by a concubine, (Gen. xxxvi. 12.). The firſt mention we have made of them as a people, was their being engaged in a very unjuſt war with the children of Iſrael, (Ex. xvii. 8.). This provoked God to determine, or at leaſt upon this occaſion he was pleaſed to intimate, their being devoted to utter deſtruction; as Exod. xvii. 14. 15. 16. "And the Lord ſaid unto Moſes, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearſe it in the ears of Joſhua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Moſes built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-niſſi. For he ſaid, Becauſe the Lord hath ſworn, that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

The injuſtice and impiety of this action of the Amalekites, which provoked God, not only to threaten, but to ſwear their deſtruction, may be learned from the account of this matter given us in Deut. xxv. 17. 18. 19. "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; how he met thee by the way,

and ſmote the hindmoſt of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou waſt faint and weary; and he feared not God. Therefore it ſhall be, when the Lord thy God hath given thee reſt from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to poſſeſs it, that thou ſhalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou ſhalt not forget it." From this it appears, that the Amalekites attacked the Iſraelites unprovoked, and without any cauſe; for the Iſraelites neither intended to poſſeſs themſelves of their country, nor were they ſo much as paſſing by their borders, which might have given them ſome cauſe of ſuſpicion. Without any thing of this ſort, they came out of their own country, to attack the Iſraelites in the wilderneſs, either in conſequence of the old grudge between Eſau and Jacob, or from a principle of covetouſneſs, to ſeize upon the riches which they heard the children of Iſrael had brought out of Egypt.

It is further obſerved, that they cut off thoſe that were faint and weary, when the diſtreſſed condition of that people ſeemed rather to call for compaſſion and help. This was unjuſt and cruel; and diſcovers them to have been a ſavage and profligate people; eſpecially if one circumſtance more be taken notice of, that they did all this in open defiance and contempt of God. They had no doubt heard, that he intereſted himſelf in a particular manner in the preſervation of the Iſraelites, and was, in a literal ſenſe, their king and governor; and therefore it is ſaid particularly, ver. 18. of the laſt-cited paſſage, that the Amalekites feared not God."

Is there any thing abſurd or unſuitable to the majeſty of the King of kings, in his declaring he would have war with ſuch a people from generation to generation, and at laſt deſtroy them, as he certainly foreknew that they would not grow better, but worſe and worſe?

Let us not omit to obſerve the long-ſuffering and patience of God. It was not till ſome hundreds of years afterwards, that orders were iſſued out to put the ſentence in execution againſt that people, when they had filled up the meaſure of their iniquities, and were ripe for judgement. This appears evidently from the hints of their character given in the chapter where the text lies. They are called, ver. 18. "the ſinners the Amalekites," by way of emphaſis, to ſhew, that they were eminently wicked above all other people. It is no leſs evident, that their king that ruled over them was a bloody cruel man, from the words of Samuel to him, verſe 33. "As thy ſword hath made women childleſs, ſo ſhall thy mother be childleſs among women." Theſe circumſtances make it highly probable, that this prince and his people were commonly employed in the trade of war, in plundering and murdering ſuch of their neighbours as they were able to ſubdue. Now, how groundleſs are all the tragical outcries of unbelievers againſt this part of the hiſtory of the Bible! Is not God the ſupreme diſpoſer of every event? Is not the fate of nations decided by his righteous will? Is he not known by the exerciſe of this his holy prerogative, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay?" It is inconteſtable, from many undoubted facts in the hiſtory of provi-

dence, that "verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth." O that this were conſidered in time by many who are bold enough to impeach the conduct of their Maker! to whom one part of the character of the Amalekites ſeem very applicable, "They fear not God."

It will perhaps be expected that I ſhould take particular notice of that part of the command given to Saul, to deſtroy the "infants and ſucklings," together with thoſe who were come to age. On this you may obſerve, that it was no more than the exerciſe of that abſolute right which God hath to the lives of all his creatures. He gave them at his pleaſure, and he may recall them whenever he will. Thoſe who offer this objection againſt the ſcripture-hiſtory, do not ſeem to conſider, that it militates equally againſt the daily and viſible courſe of providence. How many infants do we ſee daily carried off by the diſeaſes incident to that ſtate? Do not the half of mankind die before they grow up to the years of reaſon? Does this happen without the foreknowledge and providence of God? or dare any charge him with being unjuſt in this part of his will? If we dare not preſume to go ſo far, then the commanding the children to be cut off by the hand of man, is a mere circumſtance, that cannot alter the nature of the decree. The ſovereignty of God appears in the cleareſt manner from the whole of his written word, and from what happens every day before our eyes. Inſtead, therefore, of raiſing preſumptuous objections againſt ſuch inſtances as this referred to in the text, it would be far more juſt, as well as dutiful, to infer from them,

that we are "conceived in ſin, and brought forth in iniquity;" that we lie under an univerſal forfeiture of life, and therefore a righteous God may execute it upon us at whatever time, and in whatever manner, it ſeems good unto himſelf.

I might alſo obſerve, that if we conſider the circumſtances in which theſe Amalekite children were, from the character of their parents, we ſhall ſee, in the conduct of God towards them, a mixture of mercy with judgement. I have already obſerved, from the ſacred hiſtory, what wicked perſons the Amalekites were. Now, ſuppoſing their children left to be trained up by their parents, the preſumption is, that they would have been formed by their pernicious example, to murder and rapine, and all ſorts of wickedneſs; and, in particular, to a hatred of the people and God of Iſrael. This would have rendered their condition infinitely more miſerable than we can poſſibly ſuppoſe it by their being cut off in infancy, before the commiſſion of actual guilt. Have we not every day before our eyes examples of perſons living and dying in ſin, to whom it would have been a great mercy if their eyes, as ſoon as ever they ſaw the light, had been cloſed up in everlaſting darkneſs? Upon the whole, we have reaſon to be fully ſatisfied on every ſuch queſtion as this, by reſolving it into the ſovereignty of God; but I have ſhortly mentioned this particular, to ſhew how incapable we are of forming a proper judgement of the procedure of Divine Providence; and that the order to deſtroy "both man and woman, infant and ſuckling," when given by the

Lord of nature, hath nothing in it either unjuſt or unmerciful.

This awful command was given to Saul the king of Iſrael; which he, being fully ſatisfied of its coming from God, prepared himſelf to execute. But he and the people, from a principle of covetouſneſs, reſerved what was moſt valuable of the effects of the Amalekites for their own uſe, in direct contradiction to the command of God, who had ordered the cattle and ſubſtance of that people alſo to be deſtroyed. This was probably done to ſhew, that their puniſhment was an act of pure juſtice, without any intention to enrich his inheritance by it. When the prophet Samuel challenged Saul for his diſobedience, he endeavours to cover his conduct by a pretext of religion, ver. 15. "And Saul ſaid,—The people ſpared the beſt of the ſheep, and of the oxen, to ſacrifice unto the Lord thy God; and the reſt we have utterly deſtroyed." To this my text is the anſwer, made by Samuel, in the name of the Lord: "And Samuel ſaid, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and ſacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than ſacrifice; and to hearken, than the fat of rams."

Before I proceed to the *ſecond* general head, I will make a few obſervations on this piece of hiſtory, for your inſtruction.

1. How eaſily are people miſled into diſobedience by their preſent intereſt, or carnal inclinations! how ready are theſe to mix themſelves in all our actions, and to turn what was intended as an inſtance of obedience, into an act of impiety and

tranſgreſſion! The children of Iſrael would not deſtroy the goodly ſubſtance of the Amalekites, according to the expreſs command of God, that they might have it to themſelves; though it is remarkable, that they do not appear from the hiſtory to have made any difficulty in executing what was by far the hardeſt part of the command, viz. the ſlaying of man and woman, infant and ſuckling, that fell into their hands. Agag indeed, and him only, they excepted, perhaps to grace their triumph, or from ſome other ſelfiſh motive. Intereſt ſeems to have prevailed here; but there are other paſſions alſo which too often mix themſelves with our religion. Malice and anger, for example, and a deſire of revenge, are often ſeen to intermingle themſelves with our zeal for the glory of God, and convert one of the moſt amiable virtues into a deteſtable crime.

2. You may obſerve how natural it is for people, when challenged for any fault, to lay the blame of it upon others, even when there is little proſpect of hiding their own guilt. "But the people," ſays Saul, ver. 21. "took of the ſpoil, ſheep and oxen, the chief of the things, which ſhould have been utterly deſtroyed." Whereas, though no doubt they were alſo in the fault, he was much more guilty than they. He had received the particular command from God: he was king and leader of the people, and ought to have reſtrained them from acting contrary to the divine purpoſe. This, however, he was ſo far from ſo much as attempting, that he is ſpoken of as conſenting to, and a chief actor in the offence, ver. 9. "But Saul and the people ſpared Agag, and the beſt of the ſheep,

and of the oxen." This diſpoſition ſeems to be as old as ſin itſelf; for we ſee it in the caſe of Adam, after eating the forbidden fruit: Gen. iii. 11. 12. "Haſt thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou ſhouldſt not eat? And the man ſaid, The woman whom thou gaveſt to be with me, ſhe gave me of the tree, and I did eat." We ought to be humbled for it, as a part of the corruption of our nature, which is not only prone to the commiſſion of ſin, but backward to repentance or confeſſion.

3. We may ſee it is no unuſual thing for men to imagine they have been obedient to God even in that very action, by which they have in a remarkable manner ſhewn their diſobedience. This was plainly the caſe with Saul, whom we find maintaining and inſiſting upon his innocence, ver. 20. "And Saul ſaid unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord ſent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly deſtroyed the Amalekites." Wherever any duty, in its ſubſtance, in its circumſtances, or even in its principle, varies from the rules laid down for it in the word of God, it is eſſentially defective; and where the fault is capital, it becometh a ſin. This, I believe, will be always found to be the caſe where merit is pleaded from human performances. True obedience is alway humble, and ſenſible of the imperfections attending it. Oſtentatious obedience, if it were for no other reaſon, is an abomination in the ſight of God.

4. How often does it happen, that the excuſes for ſin are the aggravations of it! It ſeemed to Saul, that he had fully juſtified his conduct by ſaying, that he ſpared of the beſt of the ſpoil, to ſacrifice unto the Lord. If there was no ſuch thing in his or the people's mind, when they departed from their commiſſion, then it was a fearful aggravation of his ſin, to add to it the guilt of falſehood and hypocriſy; nor did it ſeem to want impiety, to pretend to offer ſacrifices from the accurſed ſubſtance of that devoted race. If, on the other hand, they really from the beginning intended to preſent a part of the ſpoil as a ſacrifice to God, it ſhows the great deceitfulneſs of ſin, which ſuggeſted this unholy compoſition, and made them think that their diſobedience might be atoned for by a gift at the altar. Many like inſtances might be given, in which the excuſes for ſin are an addition to the guilt. There are not wanting ſome who, either in a doubtful or explicit manner, would lay the blame of their ſins upon their Maker, and impute to the influence of his providence what belongs to the freedom of their own wills. At the ſame time, it is very remarkable, though melancholy to reflect upon, that thoſe excuſes for ſin which carry in them the moſt daring profanity, are commonly moſt ſtupifying to the conſcience. Such is the ſtate of all thoſe who fortify themſelves in an evil practice, by embracing looſe principles, who, having firſt given way to unbridled inclination in the breach of God's laws, ſteel themſelves againſt conviction and repentance, by a denial of his truth.

5. How great is the folly of men who hope to atone for their disobedience by any compensation, but particularly by religious rites! Saul and his people, whatever were their views at first, seem to have hoped that they might escape the punishment of disobedience by offering sacrifices. There seems to have been a tendency to this among the Jews, in general, in after times; and it is the mistaken hope of hypocrites in every age. But how manifest is the error! how gross is the delusion! Sacrifices, and all acts of worship, derive their very beauty and excellence from the disposition of the worshipper. Solomon tells us, Prov. xv. 8. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord; but the prayer of the upright is his delight." How absurd and contradictory, how dishonourable to God, is it for the same person to be a zealous worshipper and a wicked liver, a man fervent in prayer and deceitful in dealing, heavenly in his language and sensual in his heart! One would think the dreadful inconsistency of such a conduct would alarm the most drowsy conscience; but God, in righteous judgement, gives up to a spirit of slumber, that they may be the standard of punishment for the greatest sinners, who shall be appointed their portion "with hypocrites and unbelievers, in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone for evermore."

II. I PROCEED to the *second* thing proposed; which was, To show in what respects it is that obedience is opposed and preferred to sacrifice, or justly called *better*, as in the words of the text. It is

not uncommon to hear this paſſage produced in order to prove the value of moral above poſitive precepts. Moral precepts, I ſuppoſe you know, are precepts of perpetual and unchangeable obligation; and poſitive, ſuch as either have not, or do not ſeem to have, any intrinſic excellence in themſelves, but depend upon the immediate and expreſs inſtitution of God. Now, though no doubt, if it is done with proper care, and upon legitimate principles, a diſtinction may be ſtated between theſe different kinds of duties; yet it is plain, that this cannot be the ſpirit of the paſſage before us. There needs no more to ſatisfy us of this, than to reflect upon the hiſtory illuſtrated above, which gave occaſion to the words of the prophet. That command of God, for diſobedience to which Saul was ſo ſeverely reproved, and afterwards ſo ſignally puniſhed, was ſo far from being in itſelf a moral duty antecedent to the command, that it was not merely a poſitive, but an occaſional and temporary duty: nay, without the expreſs appointment and authority of God, it would have been an atrocious crime, viz. "Utterly deſtroying the Amalekites, man and woman, infant and ſuckling." We have not, therefore, the leaſt encouragement from this example to make light of any command that is ſupported by the inſtitution and authority of God. 'Well, then,' may it be ſaid, 'were not ſacrifices inſtituted by him? and how does the prophet affirm in this paſſage, that "obedience is better than ſacrifice?" For illuſtrating this, and at the ſame time guarding it againſt perverſion and abuſe, I intreat your attention to the following obſervations.

1. Obedience is preferred to ſacrifices, as they were uncommanded, free, and voluntary. If we attend to the ſacrifices under the law, we ſhall find them of different kinds; particularly, we ſhall find them diſtinguiſhed in this reſpect, that ſome of them were expreſsly and poſitively ordained, and others were left to the good-will or ſpontaneous inclination of the offerer. The firſt were binding upon the whole of that people in the ſtrongeſt manner, and could not be diſpenſed with; the other were left to themſelves, as the occaſion ſhould point out the propriety, and the piety or gratitude of their hearts ſhould diſpoſe to the performance. It would be a great miſtake to ſuppoſe, that the appointed ſervice of the ſanctuary might be omitted or altered by any human prudence, or diſpenſed with, even under pretence of obedience to the moral law. The obſervation of the Sabbath, of circumciſion, of the paſſover, the daily burnt-offering, the annual ſacrifice on the great day of expiation, the treſpaſs-offering, and many others, were ſo indiſpenſably neceſſary, that no oppoſition was to be preſumed or imagined between them and the moral law. Nay, the whole circumſtances of theſe rites were preciſely ſpecified, and thoſe who varied any thing in the manner of their obſervation were to be cut off from their people. For this ſee Exodus, xii. 19.; xxxi. 14. and many other paſſages. I muſt further obſerve, that even with reſpect to voluntary or free-will offerings, though they were left at liberty whether they would offer ſuch at all or not; yet if they did offer, the manner in which it behoved to be conducted, was appointed preciſely,

and they were forbidden to depart from it, under the ſame awful ſanction. You may ſee the rules laid down for peace-offerings in the 2d and 3d chapters of Leviticus; and for the danger of any error in attending on them, ſee Lev. vii. 20. 21.; Lev. xvii. 8. 9. Now, nothing can be more plain, than that the ſacrifices which Saul and his people had in view to offer, or at leaſt pretended to have had in view, were voluntary or free-will offerings: they were no part of the regular, ſtated, unalterable ſervice of the ſanctuary; but might be offered or not as they themſelves thought proper. When you remember this, my brethren, you will ſee with how great juſtice and force the prophet oppoſes ſacrifices of this kind to obeying the voice of the Lord: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?" As if he had ſaid, 'Can you imagine that God will be as well pleaſed with gifts of your own deviſing, as with a ſtrict and punctual execution of the orders which himſelf had given; eſpecially when the very ſacrifices you would offer to him, are purchaſed by the breach of his own expreſs command?'

The words of the text having been ſpoken by an Old-Teſtament prophet, and in language directly ſuited to the circumſtances of that diſpenſation, I have kept the laws of the Moſaic œconomy cloſely in view. The ſpirit however of the whole, and the truth reſulting from it, belongs as clearly and ſenſibly to us as to the fathers. We are not to preſume to make light of any inſtitution of God, though, either in whole or in part, of a poſitive nature. But conſidering ſacrifices as including all

acts of worſhip, nay all acts of religion or ſervice to God, of whatever kind, ſo far as they are voluntary in their circumſtances, let us not think to put them in the room of obedience to his law. If any man, from this paſſage of ſcripture, ſhall take liberty to deſpiſe the Sabbath, to forbear prayer in ſecret and in family, to neglect the ſacraments or inſtituted worſhip of God, he perverteth and wreſteth the ſcriptures, to his own deſtruction. On the other hand, if any perſon, under pretence of extraordinary prayer, ſhall neglect his calling, if he ſhall put voluntary faſts and bodily mortification in the room of repentance, if he ſhall make donations to the poor, or to ſacred uſes, inſtead of paying his juſt debts, to the prejudice of others, it may, with great propriety, be ſaid to him in the words of Samuel, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than ſacrifice? and to hearken, than the fat of rams."

2. Obedience is oppoſed to ſacrifices, as they are falſe and hypocritical. Even in thoſe ſacrifices that were moſt expreſsly appointed, and of the moſt indiſpenſable obligation, there might be an eſſential defect, from the inward diſpoſition not correſponding to the outward action. Reaſon, as well as ſcripture, teacheth us, that in all acts of worſhip the ſincerity of the heart makes the chief ingredient. It is the prerogative and the glory of God, that he ſearcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men. Therefore, in every part of his ſervice, he requires integrity and uprightneſs of heart: "He deſireth truth in the in-

ward parts." That I may treat this part of the ſubject with the greater diſtinctneſs, you may obſerve, that our ſacrifices or worſhip may be polluted by a twofold hypocriſy. Theſe may be called, hypocriſy towards God, and hypocriſy towards man; or, in other words, inconſiſtency or unſoundneſs in the character, and diſguiſe or inſincerity in the act of worſhip.

(1.) Our ſacrifices may be polluted by inconſiſtency or unſoundneſs in the character. This is the caſe where men are careful in attending upon the inſtitutions of religion, but do not make conſcience of keeping the commandments of God in their ordinary converſation; when they are punctual in the outward performance of the duties of the law, but are under no reſtraint as to ſins againſt the ſecond; but, in a particular manner, when they are under the unhappy deluſion of imagining, that the one will make atonement for the other. I believe it will be found, that this is the meaning of many paſſages of ſcripture, where ſacrifices are ſpoken of with diſregard. The word of God could never be ſo inconſiſtent with itſelf, as to condemn them ſimply, while the law concerning them ſtood in force; but when they were offered by wicked men, when they were reſted on as the whole of religion, or made to compenſate for the neglect of moral duties, then they are ſpoken of with abhorrence: Hoſea, vi. 6. "For I deſired mercy, and not ſacrifice; and the knowledge of God, more than burnt-offerings. But they like men have tranſgreſſed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherouſly againſt me." Iſ. i. 10.—17. "Hear the

word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomerrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination unto me; the new-moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with: it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new-moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes: cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgement; relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless; plead for the widow." Psal. l. 16. "Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth?" Amos, v. 21.—24. "I hate, I despise your feast-days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt-offerings, and your meat-offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judge-

ment run down as waters, and righteouſneſs as a mighty ſtream."

Indeed, my brethren, what can be more abominable, than the worſhip of ſuch perſons as live in the habitual indulgence of ſin? what more provoking to God? what more preſumptuous in the ſinner? And who can ſufficiently wonder at the blindneſs of all of this character? That their very acceſs to God, which ſhould increaſe their abhorrence of ſin, ſhould, notwithſtanding, ſet them at eaſe in the commiſſion of it? Will he bear more in you, think you, than in others? He will bear leſs. He will viſit you ſooner in his providence, and he will puniſh you heavier to all eternity. Things are quite oppoſite to what you ſuppoſe. Inſtead of your duties rendering your ſins pardonable, your ſins render your duties inſupportable.

(2.) The other kind of hypocriſy is, when men put on religion as a cloak and covering on their wickedneſs, and, without any inward regard or ſenſe of duty to God, aim only at the praiſe of men. This is, if poſſible, more daring and preſumptuous than the other, or rather is a more advanced ſtage of the ſame character. It was for this that our Saviour ſo ſeverely reprehended the Phariſees: Matth. vi. 1. 2. "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be ſeen of them; otherwiſe ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore, when thou doſt thine alms, do not ſound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the ſynagogues and in the ſtreets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I ſay unto you, They have their reward." And ver. 5. "And

when thou prayeſt, thou ſhalt not be as hypocrites are: for they love to pray ſtanding in the ſynagogues, and in the corners of the ſtreets, that they may be ſeen of men. Verily I ſay unto you, They have their reward." But truly this is not all. Some are not ſatisfied with doing things in themſelves praiſe-worthy from oſtentation, or the hope of applauſe from men, but they endeavour, by their ſhining and burning zeal in ſuch things, to blind the eyes of others, and hinder them from diſcovering and puniſhing their ſecret wickedneſs: Matth. xxiii. 14. "Wo unto you, Scribes and Phariſees, hypocrites; for ye devour widows houſes, and for a pretence make long prayers; therefore ye ſhall receive the greater damnation." Whenever this is the caſe, it is no wonder that obedience ſhould be preferred before ſacrifice, and indeed ſet in oppoſition to it. You ſee, however, that this is no more than what our Saviour ſays of almſgiving, which is ſo eminent a moral duty, but which can never find acceptance with God, when done merely from a principle of oſtentation. It is impoſſible, upon the whole, to ſet this matter in a juſter light than our Saviour has done, in ſpeaking of the ſame Phariſees, Matth. xxiii. 23. "Wo unto you, Scribes and Phariſees, hypocrites; for ye pay tithe of mint, and aniſe, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgement, mercy, and faith: theſe ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

3. Obedience is oppoſed to ſacrifices, as they are *dead* and *formal*. I am not at this time to mention all the ends which an infinitely wiſe God intended

to ſerve by the appointment of ſacrifices: but every one muſt be ſenſible, that they could be of no avail without taking in the principle from which they were brought, and the temper and diſpoſition of the offerer. There was no doubt very much of outward form in the Moſaic œconomy; and the ritual practices bore ſo great bulk in it, that, by way of compariſon with the ſpirituality of the goſpel, it is called the *law of a carnal commandment*. But it would be miſtaking it very much to ſuppoſe, that God was fully ſatisfied with, or deſired that his people ſhould reſt in the outward form. This is plain from many paſſages of ſcripture. What an example of fervour and elevation of ſpirit have we in the exerciſe and language of the pſalmiſt David, through the whole of his writings! You may ſee, Pſ. v. 7. "But as for me, I will come into thy houſe in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worſhip toward thy holy temple." Pſ. xxvi. 6. "I will waſh mine hands in innocency: ſo will I compaſs thine altar, O Lord." To this you may add what he ſays, Pſal. li. 16. 17. "For thou deſireſt not ſacrifice, elſe would I give it: thou delighteſt not in burnt-offering. The ſacrifices of God are a broken ſpirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not deſpiſe."

In oppoſition to this, however clear a dictate both of reaſon and ſcripture, it ſeems to have been the diſeaſe of ancient times, to imagine that the ſacrifices were ſome how neceſſary or uſeful to their Maker in themſelves; and that he was pleaſed with the poſſeſſion of the gift, independent of the diſpoſition of the giver. This led both Jews and

Gentiles to ſuppoſe, that the more numerous and coſtly the victims, the greater would be their influence: Micah, vi. 6. "Wherewith ſhall I come before the Lord, and bow myſelf before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleaſed with thouſands of rams, or with ten thouſands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firſt-born for my tranſgreſſion, the fruit of my body for the ſin of my ſoul?" To ſuch an exceſſive height did this error proceed, that on extraordinary occaſions the heathens of many different nations offered human ſacrifices, and endeavoured, by their number, their youth, or the high rank of their parents, to increaſe their value in the ſight of God. In oppoſition to this groſs deluſion, God often aſſerts his all-ſufficiency, as well as ſovereignty; as particuly in that admirable paſſage, Pſ. l. 7.—14. "Hear, O my people, and I will ſpeak; O Iſrael, and I I will teſtify againſt thee: I am God, even thy God. I will not reprove thee for thy ſacrifices, or thy burnt-offerings, to have been continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thy houſe, nor he-goats out of thy folds. For every beaſt of the foreſt is mine, and the cattle upon a thouſand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beaſts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; for the world is mine, and the fulneſs thereof. Will I eat the fleſh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thankſgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Moſt High." And even with regard to their ordinary attendance on inſtruction, he ſays, Ezekiel, xxxiii,

31. " And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they ſit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they ſhew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetouſneſs."

This conduct, ſo diſhonourable to God, and ſo inconſiſtent with the holineſs and purity of his nature, had no ſufficient excuſe either among Jews or Heathens. But ſurely it is ſtill more criminal among Chriſtians. The goſpel, as a diſpenſation of clearer light, and greater purity, is called *the miniſtration of the Spirit*. And, in oppoſition to all ceremonial and local worſhip, our Saviour ſays, John, iv. 23. 24. " But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worſhippers ſhall worſhip the Father in ſpirit and in truth; for the Father ſeeketh ſuch to worſhip him. God is a ſpirit; and they that worſhip him, muſt worſhip him in ſpirit and in truth." But are there not ſome amongſt us who may be juſtly charged with guilt in this reſpect? or rather, who is there amongſt us that does not in ſome degree fall under the reproof? Are there not ſome who reſt in the form of worſhip, and are ſtrangers to the ſpirit of it? Are there not ſome who value and truſt in their forms, while they are regardleſs of the ſpirit? Nay, are there not ſome who not only ſubmit to, but are pleaſed with the form, and yet have no reliſh for that nearneſs to God, and ſenſe of his preſence, which conſtitutes the ſpirit of worſhip? How many ſinful motives may bring us to the houſe of God! If you come to avoid the reproach of men, is that a real ſacrifice to God? If you come from

oſtentation, to be ſeen of men, is that an offering acceptable to God? If you come to gratify your fancy, by hearing the performance of man, you are offering the incenſe to the creature that is due only to God. Conſider further, how often we may be ſinfully employed in the houſe of God. Are careleſs inattentive perſons offering acceptable ſacrifices to God? Are thoſe who indulge vain, proud, ſenſual, covetous thoughts in worſhip, offering ſacrifice to God? Are thoſe who come to cenſure or admire the ſpeaker offering ſacrifice to God? In all ſuch caſes, without any diſparagement to the holieſt inſtitutions of God, or rather from a juſt concern to defend them from profanation, we may ſay, in the words of the text, "Behold, to obey is better than ſacrifice; and to hearken, than the fat of rams."

4. In the *laſt* place, obedience is oppoſed to ſacrifices, as they are miſplaced and unſeaſonable. In the ancient diſpenſation, time and place were as much aſcertained as any circumſtance that belonged to the temple-ſervice; and nothing could be more contrary to the ſpirit of that œconomy, than taking any liberty with the order which God himſelf had eſtabliſhed. There are ſeveral inſtances of heavy judgements denounced againſt princes, whoſe chief fault ſeems to have been, offering the appointed ſacrifices in forbidden places, or at improper ſeaſons. If, therefore, he would not ſuffer any variation in circumſtances which he had preſcribed, how could Saul ſuppoſe, that he would accept of a ſacrifice in the place of a duty which he had commanded? It is alſo to be obſerved, that the duties

of the moral law are perpetually binding; and therefore, when in providence any example of them occurs, ſtrengthened with the urgent call of neceſſity and mercy, they become exceptions to an ordinance of a poſitive nature. Thus our Saviour does not contradict the law of Moſes in what he teaches concerning the Sabbath; but ſhews in what manner that command was, or ought always to have been underſtood by the Jews themſelves. See an inſtance of this, Luke, xiii. 14. 15. 16. "And the ruler of the ſynagogue anſwered with indignation, becauſe that Jeſus had healed on the Sabbath-day, and ſaid unto the people, There are ſix days in which men ought to work; in them, therefore, come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath-day. The Lord then anſwered him, and ſaid, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the Sabbath-day looſe his ox, or his aſs, from the ſtall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, theſe eighteen years, be looſed from this bond on the Sabbath-day?" See alſo two other examples of the ſame thing, in the 12th chapter of the goſpel according to Matthew; in ſupport of which our Lord cites a paſſage from the Old Teſtament, ver. 7. "But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not ſacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltleſs."

The ſame general rule is to be obſerved at all times. We muſt attend to the intimations of providence, and, as far as they can be clearly diſcerned, diſcharge thoſe duties to which we are immediately

called. Every thing is beautiful in its place and ſeaſon, and is then not only moſt acceptable to God, but moſt uſeful to men. It is ſo far from being any diſparagement of ſacrifices, that it is their very excellence, to be confined to their time and place. And the maxim in the text will apply with equal propriety to every duty of the moral law. The moſt excellent of them may be miſapplied. True religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is, to viſit the fatherleſs and the widow; and yet, if the time of divine worſhip be unneceſſarily choſen for that purpoſe, or if too much time be conſumed in it by thoſe whoſe preſence cannot be uſeful, it is a rejected ſacrifice. Feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked, is the character that ſhall meet with the approbation of our final Judge; and yet, if any ſhall, out of oſtentation, feed the poor abroad, and ſtarve their families at home, or perform this duty at the expence of any other more immediately binding, he falls under the condemnation of the prophet in the text: "Behold, to obey is better than ſacrifice; and to hearken, than the fat of rams." To conclude this head, we ſhall greatly miſinterpret this paſſage of ſcripture, if we pretend to honour one part of religion to the prejudice of another. The ſacrifices condemned by the prophet are not to be underſtood of poſitive duties, as oppoſed to moral, nor of acts of worſhip, as oppoſed to the duties of the ſecond table; but of every act of religion, however excellent in itſelf, or neceſſary in its place, if it is done from an ill principle, with a ſinful purpoſe, in a ſinful manner, or ſubſtituted in the room of that

which God in his providence doth immediately require.

III. I PROCEED now to make ſome practical improvement of what hath been ſaid. And,

1. From what hath been ſaid, you may learn what are the great characters of acceptable obedience; and, I think, they may be reduced to the three following. (1.) It muſt be an implicit obedience. It muſt be founded immediately and directly on the authority of God. We muſt not take upon us to judge of the moment and importance of any part of his will, further than he hath made it known himſelf. It is a very dangerous thing for us to make compariſons between one duty and another, eſpecially with a view of diſpenſing with any of them, or altering their order, and ſubſtituting one in another's place. (2.) A ſecond character of true obedience is, that it be ſelf-denied and impartial, that it be not directed or qualified by our preſent intereſt. It was the beſt of the ſpoil that Saul and the people ſaved; that which was vile and refuſe, they utterly deſtroyed. It is too common, that our own intereſt both points out the object, and aſſigns the meaſure of our obedience; and in that caſe, it does not deſerve the name of obedience to God at all. But when the Chriſtian is devoted to God, ready at his call, and equally diſpoſed to any employment aſſigned him in providence, he then may be ſaid indeed to do his will. (3.) A third character of obedience is, that it be univerſal, without any exception. Saul, and the children of Iſrael, had complied ſo far with the order

given them, that the greateſt part both of the people and ſubſtance of Amalek was deſtroyed; but he ſtopped ſhort, and knowingly left unfiniſhed what had been enjoined him by the ſame authority.

2. From what hath been ſaid on this ſubject, you may ſee, that the true notion of obedience is inconſiſtent with the notion of merit, as if we could lay our Maker under ſome ſort of obligation. This is as fatal and dangerous an error as any whatever, to think we may merit at the hand of God, and yet very common. Nay, it ſeems to be natural to us all, with great difficulty reſtrained, and never in this life wholly overcome. You ſee how Saul juſtified himſelf, and ſaid, "Yea, but I have obeyed the voice of the Lord." But, in the judgement of God, there was no conſideration had of what had been done, but a ſevere ſentence of condemnation upon him for what he had neglected. True obedience is always conſidered, in this light, as a debt due to God, for the performance of which nothing can be claimed, but for the neglect of which a penalty is incurred. I wiſh this were properly attended to. The guilt of tranſgreſſion is plainly inconſiſtent with the merit of obedience. If we are liable to puniſhment for not obeying, the right of our Maker to our ſervice muſt be complete, there is no room to plead any merit in compliance, and the reward muſt be of grace, and not of debt. Thus, I think, it is always felt by good men; and the more that they are devoted to God, they are the leſs diſpoſed to avail themſelves of any thing they have done, and the more inclined to aſk forgive-

nefs for what hath been either omitted or ill done.

3. From what hath been faid, you may learn the great defects of our obedience in general. If we conſider the characters of true obedience, implicit, impartial, and univerſal, we muſt be ſenſible what great blemiſhes attend every act of duty to God which we perform. We ſhall always find ſomething amiſs, either in its extent, its principle, or its end. What reaſon this for humiliation! what a powerful argument to every Chriſtian to live a life of continual dependence on divine ſtrength to enable him to obey, and divine mercy to accept of his imperfect obedience! Nothing but great ignorance of themſelves, or great inattention to what paſſes in their own hearts, can embolden them to put confidence in themſelves. And indeed their doing ſo is commonly attended with very mortifying effects. When God leaves them, in fatherly diſpleaſure, to prove and try them, or when he leaves ſinners to themſelves, to fill up the meaſure of their iniquities, it ſoon affords a ſatisfying proof, that in us, that is in our fleſh, dwelleth no good thing. To will may be preſent with us, but to do that which is good we find not.

4. In the *laſt* place, Suffer me earneſtly to exhort you to make it your daily ſtudy, not only to keep the commandments of God, but to take particular notice from what principle your obedience flows. See how much there is in it of ſelf-denial, of devotedneſs to God, of ſubjection to his providence. One act of ſilent ſubmiſſion, or a quiet application to thoſe duties that are immediate-

ly neceſſary, though neither eaſy nor honourable, is of much more value than a long tract of activity and zeal in a public and viſible ſphere of action, ſweetened by reputation and applauſe. As the ſubmiſſive Chriſtian lives upon the Creator alone, independent of the creature; ſo the obedient Chriſtian ſerves his God and Redeemer alone, without paying any regard to the eſteem or approbation of his fellow-ſinners. In this way only is your obedience given to God, and in this way only will you find it pleaſant or profitable to yourſelves. If you keep clearly and cloſely to the command of God, and have not ſo much as any other deſire, or inclination, than to know what it is, you will hardly ever be miſtaken. But if you allow any other motives to have place, if you take upon you to judge of what is moſt proper or expedient, or even practicable, you will pollute every part of your duty, and find yourſelves often involved in impenetrable darkneſs. If what is duty be the inquiry, and intereſt ſet aſide, if duty be the object of your attention, and events left to God, you will find unſpeakable conſolation from it in the mean time, as well as the ſucceſs more effectually ſecured than it could poſſibly have been by any anxiety or foreſight of your own. Let God, then, have the unadulterated obedience of all his creatures; and let us aſk of him, according to his promiſe, "to work in us to will and to do of his good pleaſure."

SERMON XIV.

THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF VISIBLE RELIGION.

MATTHEW, v. 16.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

THERE are two different diviſions frequently made of practical religion. One, into our duty to God, and our duty to man. Not as though every part of our duty were not to be ultimately referred to God, and to be done from a regard to his authority enjoining it; but becauſe there are ſome duties, of the performance of which the Lord our Maker, and ſome of which our neighbour, is the immediate object. Another common diviſion is into the hidden and the apparent part; the inward frame and temper of the mind, and the outward life and converſation. Theſe two diviſions, though they are near akin to one another, and often by indiſtinct ſpeakers in a great meaſure confound-

ed, yet are by no means one and the ſame; and when the difference is not ſufficiently attended to, it is followed by many bad conſequences. It is undeniable, that God is chiefly delighted with truth in the inward parts; yet there are many of the duties we owe to God, which ought to have an outward expreſſion, which without it will not be acceptable to him, but which are greatly neglected by thoſe who imagine that a good life and converſation implies no more than the performance of a few of the moſt obvious and neceſſary ſocial virtues. The truth is, there are few things that ſeem to be leſs underſtood than the nature, extent, and obligation of viſible religion. Some lean to one extreme, and ſome to another. Reproaches are mutually thrown upon one another. Some are blamed for too much profeſſion; and they are ready to retort the charge, and blame their accuſers, with at leaſt equal juſtice, for too little, or none at all. In the mean time, there are too few of any ſort who have ſuch a conduct and character as really adorns the doctrine of their Saviour, and ſerves for the inſtruction of ſinners, or the edification and comfort of thoſe who fear God. For this reaſon I have choſen to inſiſt a little upon theſe words of our Saviour to his diſciples, in his excellent ſermon on the mount, "Let your light ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

I am ſenſible that ſome, and particularly one commentator of great eminence, underſtand theſe words as addreſſed only, or chiefly, to the twelve apoſtles; and that by *light* is to be underſtood their

doctrine, which they were to let or to suffer to shine; freely to communicate, as they had freely received it. This they presume to have been intended, in opposition to the heathen philosophers and the Jewish teachers, who confined their instructions to their schools, and imparted what they esteemed their valuable discoveries only to a few select disciples. To support this interpretation, it is alledged, that the metaphor of light is constantly used in scripture to signify knowledge; and that of darkness, ignorance. But though this be the primary intention of the metaphor, it is surely sometimes carried on to express the effects of knowledge; and not only walking in the light, (as 1 John, i. 7.), but shining as lights in the world, (as in Phil. ii. 15.), an expression almost the same with that in our text, is used to signify holiness of life. Besides, I do not think the above interpretation can be made, without some constraint, to agree with the expression in the last part of the verse, "that they may see your good works." I understand the words, therefore, as originally addressed to all who then heard our Lord's discourse, and now to all professing Christians; and by the expression, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works;" that the holiness and purity of their conversation should be visible and eminent; that men by observing it might be constrained to acknowledge the truth and power of the principles which produced it, and persuaded to to yield themselves also to their government.

In discoursing upon this subject, what I propose, through divine assistance, is,

I. To illuſtrate the meaning and extent of the exhortation, *Let your light ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee your good works.*

II. To illuſtrate the motives with which it is enforced, as they are contained in the text, the glory of God, and the good of others: And, in the *laſt* place, to make ſome practical improvement of what may be ſaid.

I. In the *firſt* place, then, let us conſider the extent and the meaning of the exhortation, "Let your light ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee your good works." This, in general, includes the whole of viſible religion; every part of the duty of a Chriſtian to which his neighbours are or may be witneſſes. And here it is of importance to obſerve, that though the inward temper of the mind is not in itſelf and immediately the object of human obſervation; and though there may be, and there is, much hypocriſy in the world; yet every diſpoſition of the heart hath a natural and genuine expreſſion, and may be more clearly or more obſcurely diſcerned by ſome outward ſymptoms. There are, therefore, few groſſer miſtakes than to ſuppoſe, either that no concluſions will, or that none ought, to be drawn by the world about us, concerning our inward diſpoſitions, from our outward carriage. So eſtabliſhed is the connection between them, that hypocrites are uſually much more ſucceſsful in deceiving themſelves than the world. On the other hand, thoſe who, from a real or pretended fear of the imputation of hypocriſy, put off all outward appearances of devotion, and

abſtain from all expreſſions of the inward exerciſe of their ſouls, will hardly perſuade any impartial perſon, that the hidden ſource is ſtrong and plentiful, when the ſtreams which ſhould iſſue from it are ſo eaſily concealed. Other natural affections of the mind, as ſorrow, anger, and joy, do immediately diſcover themſelves in the countenance and carriage; and though they may be reſtrained and moderated, can ſcarcely be wholly or long concealed. Why then ſhould it be otherwiſe with religious affections, which are at leaſt as juſt in their nature, and much more noble in their object? I am afraid we may ſay, with too much truth, that there is but little real religion in the world at preſent; and yet even that little is often, in a moſt ſhameful and cowardly manner, diſſembled or denied.

But becauſe the impreſſion of general truths is but ſeldom ſtrong or laſting, I ſhall add a few particular obſervations, for opening the meaning and extent of this exhortation, *Let your light ſhine before men.*——And, in the *firſt* place, If you would make your light to ſhine before the world, you muſt be careful of the practice of ſuch duties as are moſt *rare* and *uncommon*; and that whether their being ſo ariſes from the difficulty of the duties themſelves, or from the peculiar degeneracy and contrary practice of any particular age or place. The metaphor itſelf will teach you this. Nothing can be ſaid to ſhine, but that which throws out a diſtinguiſhed luſtre, in compariſon of other objects. Thoſe who are but as other men, and do no way excel the world about them, cannot poſſibly bring

any honour to their profeſſion, or be properly ſaid to make their light to ſhine. Thus our Saviour argues, in recommending a very rare and eminent virtue, Matth. v. 44. 46. 47. "But I ſay unto you, Love your enemies, bleſs them that curſe you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which deſpitefully uſe you, and perſecute you.—For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the ſame? And if ye ſalute your brethren only, what do ye more than others?"

I obſerved, in entering upon this particular, that the practice of ſome duties may be uncommon, either from the difficulty of the duties themſelves, or the peculiar degeneracy of any particular age or place. The firſt of theſe happens in all thoſe caſes in which the law of God, from its purity and ſpirituality, is moſt immediately contrary to the bent of carnal affection. For though it be true in general, as the apoſtle Paul tells us, (Rom. viii. 7.) that "the carnal mind is enmity againſt God; for it is not ſubject to the law of God; neither indeed can be;" yet this enmity is much ſtronger in ſome caſes than in others. Some of thoſe gracious diſpoſitions which ſhone in the man Chriſt Jeſus when he dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, and which he ſo ardently recommends, ſuch as, contempt of the world, and heavenlineſs of mind, meekneſs, humility, the forgiveneſs of injuries, and the love of our enemies, are much more oppoſite to the tendency of corrupt nature, than ſome other parts of the moral law. Or, to ſpeak more properly, it is only by an obedience to the will of

God, carried to this degree, and manifeſtly flowing from ſuch principles, and ſuch an inward temper, that we can make our light to ſhine in the view of an obſerving world.

I took notice alſo, that whether any duty be difficult or eaſy in itſelf, if it is neglected, or brought into contempt, by the peculiar degeneracy of any age or place, he who would make his light to ſhine before men, muſt, with boldneſs and reſolution, with ſtedfaſtneſs and conſtancy, adhere to the practice of it. If in any place, or in any age, the very outward attendance upon the ordinances of Chriſt's inſtitution is made light of, or deſpiſed, by many of every rank; if the name of God is profaned and abuſed by unholy converſation; it is then the duty of every real ſervant of God, publicly to manifeſt his eſteem and love for divine ordinances, and to maintain the higheſt reverence for the holy name of God in his diſcourſe and language. And, if I am not miſtaken, the very meaning of making our light to ſhine before men, is, to be doubly watchful in all ſuch caſes, not only on our own account, but upon account of others; or, as our Saviour expreſſed it, that they may ſee our good works: For inſtance, not only to eſteem the inſtitutions of Chriſt in the goſpel, for their tendency to promote our ſanctification and comfort, but even when theſe purpoſes might be at leaſt as well obtained in another way, at particular times; yet to attend carefully upon public ordinances, that we may contribute our part to preſerve the reſpect that is due to them: or, in the other caſe ſuppoſed, when profane ſwearing is common and prevalent,

to discover the deeper reverence for the holy name of God, and use the utmost caution in the whole of our conversation, to avoid every doubtful expression, or any thing that may have a tendency to insnare the unwary, or confirm the wicked in an evil course. You will probably conclude, that my mentioning these two instances arises from a persuasion that these sins prevail remarkably among us in the present age; and your conclusion is just. I shall add one more to them, viz. voluptuousness; either excessive sensuality and intemperance, or at least a pleasing of the flesh, with a total neglect of mortification and self-denial. And be assured, my brethren, you are particularly called upon, by the exhortation in the text, in these and every other instance of the like kind, not to lose your horror of sin by the frequency of it, but, according to the exhortation of the apostle Paul, Phil. ii. 15. to be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world."

In the *second* place, In order to make your light shine before men, you must act an unexceptionable part in all such cases as your conduct falls most *immediately*, and most *fully*, under the *observation* of others. I have said above, that the exhortation in its full extent includes the whole of visible religion. But there are some cases in which our conduct is comparatively more visible than in others, and more immediately subjected to the examination of the world. As there are some places more conspicious and exposed to public view than others, so are there also some persons in the whole of their deportment, and some actions of the same persons. It

is the laſt of theſe that chiefly relates to my preſent ſubject. Are you not ſenſible, then, that in thoſe actions which fall more immediately under the obſervation of others, the greateſt caution and circumſpection is neceſſary? It is from theſe that the judgement of men is chiefly formed of profeſſing Chriſtians, and the character fixed which they muſt bear in the world. With reſpect to other actions, men proceed more upon conjecture, and therefore will not, even themſelves, lay ſo much ſtreſs upon their obſervations; but in ſuch as are wholly ſubjected to their view, their concluſions are peremptory. If you aſk, What are thoſe actions that fall moſt immediately under the obſervation of others? I anſwer, they are many. Moſt of thoſe of which our neighbour is the object; particularly all relative duties, and alſo the government of the tongue. Although thoſe who are converſant with you may make ſhrewd gueſſes, by what they ſee in your outward deportment, whether you are conſtant in ſecret devotion, or ſerious and fervent in public, they muſt ſtill labour under much uncertainty. But a neighbour will quickly and certainly know whether you are friendly or ſelfiſh, froward or peaceable; a wife muſt know, whether ſhe hath an affectionate huſband, and a huſhand whether he hath a dutiful wife; a ſervant muſt know, whether he is under a reaſonable and gentle, or a capricious and cruel maſter; and a maſter, whether he hath a ſubmiſſive and diligent, or an idle and ſlothful ſervant. The ſame thing holds with reſpect to every other relation. And as to the government of the tongue, the world muſt know whether your converſation is pure and inoffenſive at all

times, and profitable as opportunities preſent themſelves; or if it is frothy, unprofitable, and vain, raſh, peeviſh, paſſionate, unchaſte, or cenſorious. As, therefore, in the language of our Saviour, a city that is ſet on a hill cannot be hid; ſo a Chriſtian, in theſe caſes, cannot be concealed. And I hope I may be allowed to ſay, without being thought to put the ſhadow of religion for the ſubſtance, or preferring the form to the ſpirit, that he ought, in all ſuch caſes, to be particularly watchful that nothing may eſcape him which may, in its conſequences, tend to the diſhonour of God, or the ruin of the ſouls of men.

In the *third* place, In order to make your light to ſhine before men, you muſt be careful in the diſcharge of ſuch duties as are moſt *acceptable* to others. It is ſelf-evident, that if there are ſome of the duties which we owe to our neighbours more acceptable to them than others, nothing will more recommend religion to their eſteem, which is the deſign of a ſhining converſation, than the faithful diſcharge of ſuch duties. Now, that there are ſome duties more acceptable to mankind than others, is very evident; and none will call it in queſtion, who reflect upon the different reception given to thoſe duties which promote men's temporal intereſt, and thoſe which reſtrain or puniſh their crimes. The one claſs of theſe procures the love and eſteem of all without exception, whether good or bad; the other often provokes the reſentment and inflames the paſſions of the vicious, who make ſo great a part of the world. Reflect alſo what a different reception is uſually given to a covetous hard-hearted oppreſſor, or to a fraudulent unjuſt man, on

the one hand; and to a profane ſwearer, a drunkard, or deſpiſer of religion, on the other. The firſt is hated and fled from by all; the laſt is freely careſſed by many, and indeed often by thoſe from whoſe profeſſion a more equal and impartial deteſtation of vice and wickedneſs might have been expected. This is eaſily to be accounted for, if we conſider, that worldly intereſt is the idol of by far the greateſt part of men, and that there is too ſtrong a bias to it in the very beſt.

From this it is plain, that he who would make his light to ſhine before others, muſt be extremely careful of ſuch duties as are moſt acceptable to them, particularly juſtice and integrity in all his dealings; and ſuch juſtice as, if poſſible, may be beyond diſpute, and to the conviction of all. There was a very great beauty and dignity in the language of Samuel to the children of Iſrael, when he was able to appeal to themſelves, as to the unblameableneſs of his conduct among them in a public ſtation: 1 Sam. xii. 3. "Behold, here I am: witneſs againſt me before the Lord, and before his anointed: whoſe ox have I taken? or whoſe aſs have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppreſſed? or of whoſe hand have I received any bribe to blind my eyes therewith? and I will reſtore it unto you. And they ſaid, Thou haſt not defrauded us, nor oppreſſed us, neither haſt thou taken aught of any man's hand." Mercy and charity alſo to thoſe in diſtreſs is univerſally acceptable: this is ſtill more acceptable to mankind in general than juſtice alone. The reaſon is, they think they have a claim to juſtice, and, in many caſes, can ob-

tain it by compulsion, when it is not willingly given them; besides, that worldly wisdom may easily be conceived the principle of just dealings, through fear of a discovery, and its consequences: but charity and compassion to the necessities of others, is looked upon as the free unconstrained exertion of good dispositions. The apostle Paul supposes a difference in the estimation of the world, between a merely righteous or just man, and a good or merciful man, when he says, Rom. v. 7. "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die."

The same selfish bias in men to their worldly interest, will indeed sometimes carry them so far as to make them excessive and unreasonable in their expectations. The world seems not only to expect, that those who profess to fear God should be just and upright in their dealings, merciful and charitable to proper objects; but that they should be at all times ready to yield up their own rights to the extravagant demands of worldly men, and give such evidences of self-denial, as are neither consistent with wisdom nor with piety. These excessive expectations of the world, which it is found by experience impossible to gratify, are too apt to make some, in peevishness and displeasure, throw up all hopes of, or endeavours after, avoiding its reproaches. This is to disobey God, because it is impossible perfectly to please men. The more ready they are to take offence without reason, the more watchful ought the conscientious Christian to be, that he may give no just ground for it. And undoubtedly the private example, or the public en-

deavours of any perſon for reformation, bid much fairer for ſucceſs, when his conduct is ſuch in the particulars above mentioned, as the world in general muſt confeſs to be amiable and excellent.

I ſhall only add one conſideration more, to ſhew the neceſſity or propriety of ſhining in ſuch duties as are moſt acceptable to others. It is, that uſually the looſe or profane part of the world, in order to prevent, or wipe off in ſome meaſure, the reproach which their conduct, in other inſtances, brings upon them, pretend to glory in the juſtneſs of their dealings, their generoſity and charity; and this often not without inſinuations, that thoſe who appear to be religious, are not ſo ſtrict in point of moral honeſty. It is therefore incumbent on every ſervant of God to make his practice a continual and viſible refutation of this calumny; and to ſhew, that none can, to ſuch perfection, diſcharge any moral duty whatever, as thoſe who are renewed in the ſpirit of their minds, and having the love of God ſhed abroad in their hearts, muſt of conſequence love their brethren alſo.

In the *fourth* and *laſt* place, If you would make your light ſhine before men, you muſt be diligent in the practice of ſuch duties as are moſt profitable to others. It will not be difficult to determine what are the duties moſt profitable to others, if we only conſider what has the moſt immediate tendency to promote their ſpiritual and eternal intereſt. Of this kind, there are many incumbent on perſons of every ſtation, and in every ſituation of life; though the obligation of them is little thought of, for the moſt part, and the practice generally neglected; ſuch as, private and per-

fonal inſtruction, tender and affectionate counſel, faithful admonition and reproof. Every one of us knows the perſons to whom his influence extends, when any ſcheme for his worldly intereſt and advancement, or that of his friends, or the power and credit of his party, is at ſtake; but few think of uſing the ſame intereſt for the glory of God, and the ſalvation of deluded ſinners.

Of this kind are all the duties of ſuperiors to their inferiors; as parents and heads of families, teachers of youth, miniſters of the goſpel, magiſtrates and rulers. Theſe, every one, in their ſeveral capacities, are obliged, either more directly or by conſequence, to promote the everlaſting intereſt of thoſe who are under them; and nothing will make their light more to ſhine, nothing will contribute more to adorn and illuſtrate their Chriſtian character, than a faithful, zealous, and diligent diſcharge of the duties of theſe ſtations.

Perhaps it may be thought, that the reaſoning on the former particular is contrary to this; and that if theſe duties, which are acceptable to others, make a Chriſtian's converſation to ſhine, the practice of ſuch as men are averſe from ſubmitting to muſt have an oppoſite effect. But this is far from being the caſe: for though ſome ſins are contrary to other ſins, religion is conſiſtent throughout; and every part of it, inſtead of obſcuring, throws a luſtre upon another. This will eaſily appear, if you conſider, that however unwilling men are to be inſtructed in their duty, or reſtrained and limited from their irregular indulgence; ſo ſoon as the endeavours uſed for that purpoſe are ſucceſsful, they will, with the higheſt thankfulneſs, acknowledge

the care beſtowed upon them. Though a child may, at firſt, and for ſome time, be impatient of the father's authority; if it is attended with ſucceſs, he will ever afterwards reckon it one of the greateſt bleſſings of his life; and the memory of ſuch a parent will be infinitely more dear, than of one who has ſhewn the moſt partial and indulgent fondneſs.

Further, ſuch duties, though they may be harſh and unpleaſant to thoſe who are the immediate objects of them; yet as they are unqueſtionably good and uſeful in themſelves, they muſt command the eſteem and approbation of every impartial obſerver. It is indeed by this means alone, or chiefly, that the public honour and credit of religion is preſerved, amongſt ſo great a majority who are enemies to it in their hearts. What they would hate and reſiſt, or perhaps revile, in their own caſe, when others are concerned, conſcience conſtrains them to bear a clear and ſtrong teſtimony in its favour. Nay, not only ſo, but the moſt wicked and profligate, though they hate religion and righteouſneſs in itſelf; yet are they ſufficiently ſenſible of the connection between a religious profeſſion and its proper fruits, and ſufficiently apt to reproach thoſe in whom they obſerve the deficiency; and that in ſuch caſes as the performance would be painful, and not acceptable to themſelves. Thus a child of a ſlothful parent, a ſubject of an unfaithful magiſtrate, if their profeſſion is ſuch as to make the neglect ſcandalous, ſhall deſpiſe them in their hearts, and ſometimes go ſo far as to reproach them by their words, even where their own eaſe and ſecurity is wholly owing to that very criminal indulgence. From all which

it evidently appears, that a conſcientious diſcharge of ſuch duties as are moſt uſeful and profitable to others, is highly proper to make our light to ſhine before men.

I am ſenſible, my brethren, that theſe claſſes into which I have divided our public and viſible duties, viz. ſuch as are moſt rare and uncommon, ſuch as are moſt ſubject to the obſervation of others, ſuch as are moſt acceptable, and ſuch as are moſt profitable to them, are not ſo entirely diſtinct one from another, but that there are many parts of the duty of a Chriſtian, which fall under more than one of theſe diviſions, and ſome that may perhaps fall under them all; yet I have mentioned them ſeparately, becauſe each of them hath ſome duties which do peculiarly, or at leaſt eminently, belong to itſelf: and as every one of them contributes to ſhew us the extent of our duty upon the whole, ſo they, at the ſame time, ſerve to ſet the obligations to it in a ſtriking light.

II. I PROCEED now to the *ſecond* thing propoſed, which was, briefly to illuſtrate the two motives added in the text to enforce the exhortation; and theſe are, the glory of God, and the good of others.

1. The glory of God. The glory of God is the ſupreme and higheſt aim of every real Chriſtian, to which every other deſign is ſubordinate and ſubſervient. I am not ignorant that profane and worldly men are apt to deride this language, of the glory of God being the higheſt aim of a Chriſtian. It is not, however, the leſs agreeable to truth, that it is

contrary to the ſpirit of the world: 1 Cor. ii. 14. "For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are fooliſhneſs unto him; neither can he know them, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned." It might be ſufficient to ſupport this manner of ſpeaking, to ſay, it is agreeable to the word of God, which is a much ſurer teſt of truth, than any maxims eſtabliſhed by human wiſdom. But for ſilencing gainſayers in ſome meaſure, though their conviction (without a change of heart) cannot be hoped for, I would obſerve, that it is the character of a Chriſtian to love God above all: and is it not a natural conſequence of ſupreme love, to be jealous of the honour, and zealous in the intereſt and cauſe, of the object of our eſteem? Real love cannot, even in imagination, be ſeparated from this its natural effect and expreſſion.

Now, if this is once admitted, there is no way in which we can ſo well, or rather there is no way in which we can at all promote the glory of God, but by a holy and unblameable converſation. As the works of creation are ſaid to ſhew forth his glory, becauſe they point out his natural perfections exerted in their formation; ſo his reaſonable creatures glorify him, when his image, or ſome reſemblance of his moral excellence, and this as his own workmanſhip, is diſcerned upon their hearts.

It is, no doubt, in one view, difficult for us to conceive how the glory of God, who is perfect and unchangeable, ſhould at all depend upon our conduct: yet as this is the light in which he hath repreſented it to us himſelf, ſo it is neceſſarily felt in this manner by every one of his ſervants. Indeed we ſee,

that the unholineſs or the unguarded conduct of thoſe who profeſs to ſerve God, and ſtand in an apparent relation to him, has the greateſt tendency to diſhonour him, as far as that expreſſion hath any meaning or propriety in it. The ſtate of the world may eaſily convince us of this; for as no argument has been oftener uſed againſt the goſpel, ſo none ever gave it a deeper wound, than the wicked lives of its profeſſors. As many, therefore, as have any regard to the glory of God, or the honour of the Redeemer's name, muſt carefully endeavour to make their light ſhine before men, "that they may ſee their good works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven."

2. The other obligation contained in the text, to an uſeful or ſhining converſation, is the good of others. As ſome degree of love to mankind is naturally implanted in every heart, and as love to others is the ſecond commandment of the law, and a neceſſary effect of the love of God; ſo it is impoſſible but this love, if it be real, muſt, in every believer, evidence itſelf in a deep concern for, and conſcientious endeavour after, the ſalvation of others. Whomſoever we love, we naturally expreſs this love, by endeavouring to avert from them thoſe ills which we moſt fear, and to procure for them thoſe advantages which to ourſelves appear moſt valuable: and therefore, the looking upon ſinners with indifference, and not uſing the means in our power for their recovery and ſalvation, is the moſt unqueſtionable evidence, either of our not believing the important truths of religion, or being altogether void of good-will to our fellow-creatures;

or rather of both, becauſe they are eſſential branches of the ſame character. A parent who ſhould profeſs, from his own experience, to have the greateſt apprehenſions of the danger of a certain practice, and yet ſhould freely ſuffer or encourage his children in the ſame practice, would give good ground to judge, either that his fears were wholly affected, or that he was altogether deſtitute of love to his children, or concern for their welfare.

Now, how can any man more effectually promote the real, that is, the everlaſting intereſt of others about him, than by a ſhining example of piety and uſefulneſs of converſation? A blameleſs life, ſuch as becometh the goſpel, is a more effectual reprimand to vice, and a more inviting argument to the practice of religion, than the beſt of reaſoning. Reaſon and argument, for pattern and example, is but as an uninformed picture to a living man. The moſt part of mankind are beſt inſtructed by their ſenſes, and are both unwilling to attend to, and incapable of perceiving, the force of ſpeculative reaſoning; but a good life, anſwering to what their own conſciences declare to be right, is a ſenſible repreſentation, that never fails to make an impreſſion, both on the memory and heart. As the impreſſion on the wax is more diſcernible than the engraving on the ſeal, though this laſt be juſt and perfect, whereas many accidents may render the impreſſed image faulty and defective: ſo, though a juſt and complete view of the doctrine of Chriſt is only to be had from the ſcriptures of truth, yet the general integrity and uprightneſs of a good man is more

legible to the bulk of mankind; and being the character of a man originally of like paſſions with themſelves, engages them to imitate it. From all this I conclude, that the love of God, and the love of our neighbour, jointly concur in laying the ſtrongeſt obligation upon every Chriſtian to make his light ſhine before men.

III. I PROCEED now, in the *laſt* place, to make ſome practical improvement of what has been ſaid. And,

1. From what has been ſaid, you may ſee in what reſpect alone it is our duty to aim at the approbation of others, and from what principle it ought to flow. We are bound ſo to order our outward converſation, as that it may, on the one hand, contribute nothing to the corruption of others, but rather that they may be invited to the practice, and perſuaded of the excellence and amiableneſs of true religion. There is no character againſt which our Saviour pronounces a ſeverer doom, than that of being religious that we may be ſeen of men; that is to ſay, when the view is only to procure their applauſe to our own character as a gratification of vanity. Such perſons have their reward. But when the deſign is, to watch that the name of God be not blaſphemed on our account, to bear much fruit that God may be glorified, there are few things more uſeful and important. For this reaſon the friends of religion owe no thanks to thoſe who glory in a contempt of what others think or ſay of them, who are at no pains to avoid the appearance of evil, but freely indulge themſelves in whatever

they can, with any plauſibility, alledge to be lawful in itſelf. They may cry out, as much as they will, againſt the uncharitableneſs and cenſorioufneſs of the world; but they themſelves are acting in downright contradiction to the exhortation in our text, and neither ſhew regard to the will of God, nor compaſſion to the ſouls of men. In oppoſition to this, the Chriſtian who would make his light to ſhine, in obedience to his Maſter's command, muſt uſe the utmoſt tenderneſs and circumſpection, not leſt his own reputation ſhould be wounded, but leſt religion ſhould ſuffer through his unguarded conduct. Such an one hath this advantage, that though perfectly to pleaſe a capricious world is impoſſible, he may yet obtain mercy of God to be faithful; and though there is a woe to the world becauſe of offences, he may eſcape the woe of that man by whom the offence cometh.

In the *ſecond* place, What hath been ſaid upon this ſubject ſerves to reprove the ſin, and ſhew the danger, of all thoſe who are notoriouſly deficient in the practice of the duty recommended in the text. Indeed you may ſee from the extent of it, that it affords ground of humiliation for all without exception; and, like every other precept of the pure and holy law of God, ſhews plainly, that a perfect righteouſneſs is not to be found in ourſelves; and that, for our final acceptance, we muſt be indebted to the free grace of God, through the redemption that is in Chriſt Jeſus. But, in a particular manner, this reproof is directed to two ſorts of perſons.

First, Thoſe who are wholly unprofitable to others, and altogether inſenſible of their obligation

to profit them. There are not a few in the world who openly juſtify themſelves, and extenuate their ſins by this pretence, that they do no harm to others; that, if they do evil, none ſuffer but themſelves. This is the uſual pretence of diſſolute livers, who are plunged in ſenſuality. Let ſuch conſider their entire neglect of the command of our Saviour in the text; let them conſider their obligations to ſerve God, and the account they muſt render to him. Let me ſuppoſe any of you had a ſervant who ſhould altogether neglect your buſineſs, and, upon your reproving him, ſhould make this excuſe, I have done no harm, I have put nothing out of order, I have not hindered the other ſervants in their work; how would you be ſatisfied? or rather, with what indignation would you receive the ſhameleſs pretence? Let this, then, convince you of the juſtice of the ſentence that ſhall at laſt be pronounced by our Supreme Maſter upon all ſuch: Matth. xxv. 30. "Caſt ye the unprofitable ſervant into outer darkneſs; there ſhall be weeping, and wailing, and gnaſhing of teeth." But the worſt of it is, this excuſe, weak as it is, is not true; for all thoſe who are not profitable, muſt be hurtful to others. Drunkards, ſwearers, profane and laſcivious jeſters, and the whole tribe of thoſe who pretend to do harm to none but themſelves, pollute and corrupt, by their example and influence, all that come within their reach: ſo that, for the hazard of infection, thieves and robbers are leſs dangerous companions.

But, *ſecondly*, This reproof ought to be directed to ſuch as are further chargeable with the actual guilt of ſeducing others. How many are there who,

by the contrary methods, of flattering insinuations, or derision and insult, as they expect, from the dispositions of the persons, the one or the other will be most successful, endeavour to banish a sense of religion from the minds of others, and gradually to involve them in sin and guilt! This is the immediate tendency of all that conversation, which, with a malicious pleasure, enlarges upon the real or supposed miscarriages of the people of God, and charges every profession of religion with hypocrisy. How aggravated is the guilt of all such, and how dreadful will be the punishment! They are eminent and faithful agents for the devil. The works of their father they do, and his reward they shall share. As the union and mutual love of the saints in heaven will increase the happiness of every particular member of that blessed society; so we must suppose, that the mutual reproaches of the damned and miserable spirits in hell, accusing each other as the authors of their destruction, will greatly sharpen their anguish. The fear of this seems to have alarmed the rich man, even in torments, lest his brethren should come to the same place. What must a child, for example, ruined by the neglect of restraint, or pernicious example of a parent, think of or say to the author of his misery? 'O! unmerciful monster, and not a parent, who, instead of correcting, sported with or encouraged the first instances of impiety; who taught me, by example, to profane my Creator's name, and to neglect his service; and who, though ambitious of making me rich and great for a few days in a transitory world, hath contributed to bring me to, and fix me for ever

in this place of torment! Take warning then, I beſeech you, all of every rank, and increaſe not your own condemnation by the guilt of ſeducing others.

In the *third* place, What hath been ſaid upon this ſubject will enable you to try the purity and ſincerity of your outward converſation. An inquiry here is of the more conſequence, that we are in great danger of deceiving ourſelves, becauſe both a truly ſerious and a worldly motive may lead to many of the ſame outward actions. For this purpoſe, let me aſk you, Whether it is the glory of God, and the good of others, that makes you watchful of your conduct, or a tenderneſs of your own reputation? This may be, in a good meaſure, diſcerned by the faithful ſearch and trial of your own hearts; and particularly by obſerving, whether the injuries and reproaches of wicked men excite in you a greater reſentment of the offence, or compaſſion for their folly. Again, I would aſk you, Whether you are equally conſcientious in ſuch duties as may be painful and troubleſome, and may expoſe you to the reproaches and inſults of the ungodly, as in thoſe that immediately tend to your outward honour and credit? I have ſhewn above, that it is neceſſary to make your light to ſhine, by the firſt as well as the laſt. Is, then, your concern equal and impartial to fulfil the duties of your ſtation, whatever they are, whether agreeable or mortifying to the fleſh? or are you moſt careful when you will reap the greateſt preſent reward? By examining into theſe particulars, you may be enabled to judge of the purity of your intentions.

In the *last* place, Suffer me to improve this ſubject, by an earneſt exhortation to all who now hear me, to the practice of the duty recommended in the text, to "make your light ſhine before men, that they may ſee your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." That this may be the more diſtinct and effectual, I ſhall addreſs it to three different claſſes.

First, To thoſe who are the profeſſed advocates of good works. Every one who hath any experience of, or commerce with the world, muſt know, that there is a ſet of men who profeſs to love and eſteem thoſe diſcourſes only that teach and recommend good works; and that, in order to ſtate a diſtinction, where there ought to be none, between the truths of the glorious goſpel, and the doctrines of morality. I intreat all of you to conſider what hath been ſaid of the great extent of viſible religion, and it will have a greater tendency to humble you, and excite you to ſeek the ſanctifying grace of God as the ſource of true holineſs, than to glory in the excellence or perfection of your moral character. Take heed alſo, that you fall not into the ſhameful inconſiſtency, too common in the world, of being the ſtrongeſt pleaders for moral preaching, and the leaſt tender of moral practice. What a ſhame and ſcandal is it, and how pitiful in the eyes of thoſe who underſtand what true and undefiled religion is, to hear one who is unwilling, unable, or aſhamed to worſhip God in his own family, who is but rarely to be ſeen in the public aſſemblies of God's people, who hardly ever gave child or ſervant a ſerious advice, but whom they have often ſeen guilty

of drunkenneſs and exceſs; to hear, I ſay, ſuch an one riſe up as an advocate for morality; to hear him crying out, morality is the whole of religion; and therefore that he cannot endure ſuch ſtuff as conviction and humiliation, converſion or regeneration, flying to, embracing, or relying upon a Saviour; phraſes which, among too many, are now going into deſuetude; whether they retain their important meaning, I ſhall leave to the judgement of another day. Nay, I am afraid we might produce more inſtances than one, capable of ſaying, upon hearing a diſcourſe of the love of God, 'Such things are not to be underſtood; it were pity but miniſters would ſatisfy themſelves with preaching plain morality;' as if the love of God, which is the ſum and ſubſtance of the moral law, were no part of it at all. To ſuch may it not juſtly be ſaid, Rom. ii. 23. "Thou that makeſt thy boaſt of the law, through breaking the law diſhonoureſt thou God?" Let all ſuch of you, therefore, be exhorted to act up to their character: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." But be ſure you underſtand what theſe commandments are: and then, if you maintain before God, who is greater than your hearts, that you have kept theſe perfectly, in thought, word, and deed, you may reſt your ſalvation upon it; for it not only was, but continues to be a certain truth, that "the man who doth them ſhall live in them." But it is greatly to be feared, that this is a ſource of life, by far too deep for any of the children of Adam to draw it out.

In the *second* place, I would addreſs this exhortation to all who have, or profeſs to have, a high eſteem of the doctrine of Chriſt, and of him crucified. Extremes commonly beget one another; and ſo the ill-founded zeal which deſpiſers of the goſpel ſometimes pretend for good works, makes others ſtate themſelves in oppoſition to them, and makes the word itſelf to have an unacceptable ſound. But, my brethren, beware of being thus overcome of evil. Remember the words of our Saviour, "Let your light ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee your good works." Hear alſo the apoſtle Paul, Titus, iii. 8. "This is a faithful ſaying, and theſe things I will that thou affirm conſtantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works." You cannot more effectually bring a reproach on that holy name by which you are called, and in which you glory, than by being enemies in word or in deed to holineſs and purity of converſation, or by not being even apparently and viſibly holy. For though you muſt lay your account with the reproach of men, and hatred of the world in many caſes, woe is pronounced againſt you, if you do not "love them that hate you, and bleſs them that perſecute you." Let therefore your converſation be without offence. Neglect not any part of your duty in the ſight of the world, and be the more watchful, that, on account of your profeſſion, they will be the more diligent in obſerving, and the more ſevere in cenſuring your conduct. Whilſt, therefore, you remember that faith in Chriſt is the only ſource of new

obedience, remember alſo, that faith without works is dead, being alone.

In the *laſt* place, I would addreſs this exhortation to all ſuch in this audience as, by their office or ſtation, or wealth or character, are raiſed above others. You will ſurely be ſenſible of the propriety of this exhortation, "Let your light ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee your good works." You are placed in a conſpicuous ſituation, expoſed to public view, and your influence will be great, whether it be profitable or hurtful. You ought not to count your higher ſtation in life a favour blindly beſtowed on you for your pleaſure only, but a truſt committed to you for which you muſt render an impartial account. How ſhould this repreſs and reſtrain all vain-glorious oſtentation of the temporary differences between man and man, and excite to a diligent improvement of your talents againſt the coming of your Lord, when the higheſt ſhall be upon a level with the loweſt. I hope it will contribute to enforce the exhortation, that, in this age, the declining ſtate of religion loudly calls for the aſſiſtance of all to its revival, but particularly for eminent and ſhining examples. How hard is it, that when vice and infidelity have ſo many advocates in writing and converſation, there ſhould be ſo few exerting themſelves in their ſtation for promoting of truth and righteouſneſs! And let none excuſe themſelves for their own neglect of duty, by throwing the blame upon others, and holding up to light the ſloth or wickedneſs of thoſe who are moſt eminently guilty. Let none ſay, 'Alas, my ſphere of uſefulneſs is very narrow, my

influence is very ſmall; but if thoſe who are in more eminent ſtations, and whoſe ſtations give them greater weight, would but exert themſelves, the effect would be ſenſible. Remember your ſtations are juſt what God hath aſſigned you; and for theſe, and theſe alone, you are to be called to an account. The leſs important you are, the duties are the more eaſily fulfilled, and the neglect, in one reſpect at leaſt, (though I cannot ſay in all), more criminal and inexcuſeable. To conclude, Let the wiſe and powerful magiſtrates, miniſters, parents, and heads of families, be diligent in diſcharging the duties incumbent upon them, and join earneſt prayer to God, that he would ariſe and effectually plead his own cauſe. Amen.

END OF VOLUME II.

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